CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

FRIDAY ▸ JANUARY 9, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 175 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

IBC WORLD NEWS
CH ABC
Certified English Daily

Islamist-Backed Panel Sweeps Jagannath University Union Polls P8

Mundra Port Makes History as India's First to Berth Fully Laden VLCC P9

P12 Sreeleela Shares Fondness For Mammootty, Dulquer

www.ibcworldnews.com BENGALURU ▸ HUBBALLI ▸ MANGALURU ▸ MYSURU ▸ KALABURAGI cityhilights.news@gmail.com

Karnataka to Challenge MGNREGA Repeal Legally

BENGALURU

Karnataka's Cabinet on Thursday decided to legally challenge the repeal of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), arguing that the new VB-G RAM G Act 2025 infringes on citizens' right to work and undermines local governance. Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil said the repeal violates the constitutional rights of panchayats and the federal structure. "As the decision infringed on the right to work, we will take it up in the people's court.

A legal battle against the repeal will be launched," he said at a press conference. The Cabinet resolution stated that the new law "tramples upon the legitimate rights of panchayats as vested by the Constitution" and goes against the spirit of the 73rd and 74th amendments.

ED Raid Triggers Political Storm in West Bengal

While Mamata Banerjee claimed that the raid was politically motivated and engineered by the BJP, the ED has denied the allegations

KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate has moved the Calcutta High Court after alleging interference during its raid on the I-PAC office in Kolkata, triggering a major political controversy in West Bengal. The agency said the searches were linked to an illegal coal smuggling and money laundering case. According to the ED, raids were conducted at ten locations, including six in West Bengal and four in Delhi. The agency claimed that during the operation, there was obstruction to the investigation. The matter is scheduled to be heard by Justice Suvra Ghosh on Friday.

The controversy escalated after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reached the residence of I-PAC chief and Trinamool Congress IT cell

head Pratik Jain, whose house was also being searched. The ED alleged that the Chief Minister entered the premises and removed key evidence, including physical documents and electronic devices, during the search operation.

Mamata Banerjee strongly denied the allegations and accused the ED of acting with political motives. She said the agency was trying to seize TMC's internal documents, hard disks, and sensitive organisational data. Calling the raid an act of intimidation, she accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of misusing central agencies and termed him the "nastiest home minister."

However, the ED rejected these claims and clarified that no political party office was searched. It said the operation had no connection with elections and was part of a routine investigation into cash generation and hawala transfers linked to the coal smuggling case.

In a statement, the ED said the search was conducted strictly according to law. It alleged that certain individuals, including constitutional authorities, illegally entered two premises and forcibly took away documents, thereby hampering the probe.

The incident has drawn sharp reactions from political leaders and intensified the ongoing confrontation between the central agency and the state government, adding another layer of tension to Bengal's political landscape.

JD(S) may soon merge with BJP, says DK Shivakumar

Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar hinted at a possible merger of JD(S) with the BJP, suggesting it could pave the way for a clearer two-party contest in Karnataka.

BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president D.K. Shivakumar on Thursday hinted at a possible merger of the Janata Dal (Secular) with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), signaling potential political shifts in the state.

Shivakumar made the remarks while welcoming JD(S) workers from Chamarajpet, including leader Govindaraj and his wife Gowramma, into the Congress at the KPCC office in Bengaluru. "Looking at Union Minister and JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy's approach, there is a chance that JD(S) will merge with BJP soon. If it happens, it will benefit us too. We can directly contest with the BJP without the confusion of three parties in the game," he said. The JD(S) and BJP had partnered in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, and JD(S) remains part of the NDA government at the Centre. Shivakumar's statement suggests that the upcoming political contests in Karnataka could see a clearer two-party fight, reducing alliances' complexity.

Responding to Kumaraswamy's objections over Shivakumar's meeting with police officials in Ballari after a Congress worker's death on January 1, the KPCC president asserted his experience in governance. "I have worked as a minister for a long time. I know how to manage administration and whom to meet or not," he said.

Shivakumar and Kumaraswamy have had several public disagreements on political and administrative matters. The latest developments underline the continuing tension between Congress and JD(S) leaders in Karnataka and highlight the evolving alliances that could shape the state's political landscape in the months ahead.

Hubballi incident: R Ashoka Slams Police, Seeks Judicial Probe

R. Ashoka launched a scathing attack on the K'taka govt following the alleged stripping of a woman by police in Hubballi

BENGALURU

Opposition leader R. Ashoka strongly condemned the Hubballi incident in which a woman was allegedly stripped by police, saying it has brought shame to the entire state. He demanded that the case be handed over to a judicial inquiry and that all police officers involved be immediately suspended. Speaking at a press conference, Ashoka said there is no safety guarantee for women under Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's government. He recalled earlier incidents, including the stripping of a Dalit woman in Belagavi and the rape of a girl in Mysuru, and said the Hubballi case shows a complete failure of law and order. Comparing the incident to the Mahabharata, he said the

police acted like Dushyasana, while the Chief Minister remained silent and blind to injustice. Ashoka criticised the Chief Minister for stating that the woman removed her clothes herself even before the investigation report was ready. He said such statements influence police reports and suggest an attempt to cover up the case. He questioned how a woman could remove her clothes when surrounded by many police officers inside a vehicle.

He alleged that police acted under pressure from a local Congress corporator, while showing little urgency in arresting serious criminals. Ashoka claimed that over 43,000 cases of atrocities against women have been registered during the Congress rule, calling it alarming. Demanding action by 10 a.m. on January 9, he warned of a protest in Hubballi if the police are not suspended.

PM Urges Indian AI Startups Lead Globally

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged Indian artificial intelligence startups to aim for global leadership, saying the world's growing trust in India is the country's biggest strength. He stressed that Indian AI models must be ethical, unbiased, transparent, and firmly rooted in data privacy principles.

Chairing a roundtable with Indian AI startups ahead of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, the Prime Minister said India has the ability to promote affordable, inclusive, and frugal AI solutions across the world. He called on startups to develop AI models that are distinctly Indian, support local content, and strengthen regional languages.

Modi described startups and AI entrepreneurs as co-architects of India's future and said the nation has both innovative talent and the capacity for large-scale implementation. He noted that India should present a unique AI identity to the world that reflects the vision of "Made in India, Made for the World."

Twelve Indian AI startups that qualified for the 'AI for All: Global Impact Challenge' participated in the meeting and shared their work. The Prime Minister highlighted the role of artificial intelligence in transforming society and said India's upcoming AI Impact Summit would place the country at the centre of global technology discussions.

QUICK READ

Donald Trump Clears up to 500% Tariff Bill

NEW DELHI

India faced renewed energy and diplomatic pressure on Thursday after U.S. President Donald Trump cleared a Bill proposing tariffs of up to 500% on countries buying Russian oil and announced the U.S. withdrawal from the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA). The moves come ahead of U.S. Ambassador-designate Sergio Gor's arrival in New Delhi on January 12, with Gor calling an end to India's Russian oil imports a "top priority." The sanctions Bill targets major buyers, including India, China and Brazil, while the ISA exit marks a setback to global solar cooperation.

RSS-BJP activists sentenced to life in murder case

KANNUR

A Thalassery court on Thursday sentenced seven RSS-BJP activists to life imprisonment for the 2008 murder of CPI (M) local leader Latheesh. The brutal attack took place on December 31, 2008, at Thalayi near Thalassery, leaving Latheesh dead and his friend injured. Additional District and Sessions Court Judge Vimal J found Sumith alias Kuttan, K.K. Prajesh Babu, B. Nidhin, K. Sanal, Smijosh, Sajeesh, and V. Jayesh guilty. The court acquitted four others—Santhosh Kumar, B. Sarath, E.K. Saneesh, and Kunnumprath Ajesh—while an eighth accused, K. Ajith, died during the trial.

12th-Century Hoysala Multi-Lingual Inscription Discovered

PANDAVAPURA

A rare 12th-century multi-lingual inscription from the Hoysala period has been discovered at the Mahalakshmi temple in K. Bettahalli village, Pandavapura taluk, Mandya district. Carved on white granite measuring two by two-and-a-half feet, the nine-line inscription is in Kannada, Tamil, and Sanskrit. Archaeologists said it records a land donation by military commander Karikundi Tillai Koottandi to support Krishna temple festivals during King Narasimha I's reign. The temple also houses a broken soapstone kalasha and hero stones depicting warfare and cattle raids. Experts note the find highlights historical ties between Kannada and Tamil cultures and confirms the temple's Hoysala origin.

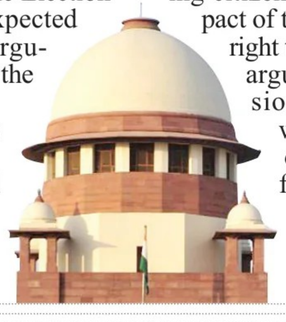
SC Defers Hearing on Electoral Rolls

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday deferred the final hearing on a group of petitions challenging the Election Commission of India's decision to conduct a Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in several states, including Bihar. The court said the hearing will now continue on January 13.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant had earlier fixed the matter for hearing during the day. However, the bench said it would resume the proceedings on Tuesday. Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the Election Commission, is expected to continue his arguments on behalf of the poll panel.

The petitions question the legality of the Special Intensive Revision, commonly known as SIR.



The challengers have raised concerns about the scope of the Election Commission's powers, the process of verifying citizenship, and the impact of the exercise on the right to vote. They have argued that the revision could lead to wrongful deletion of genuine voters from the rolls.

Earlier, on January 6, the Election Commission told the court that it has both the power and responsibility to carry out such a revision. It said the Constitution places a duty on the Commission to ensure that no foreign nationals are included in the voter lists. According to the Commission, the SIR exercise is meant to maintain clean and accurate electoral rolls.

The issue has drawn wide attention as the revision is being carried out in multiple states.

CEASEFIRE UNDER STRAIN

Israel Targets Gaza Rocket Site amid Ceasefire Uncertainty

CAIRO

Israel carried out a targeted strike on a rocket launch site near Gaza City on Thursday after detecting a failed launch, raising questions over the stability of the Gaza ceasefire. The Israeli military said the projectile did not enter Israeli territory, and the launch site was hit soon after the attempt. The Israeli army accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire twice in the past 24 hours. Palestinian health authorities reported that two people—a woman and a boy—were injured in separate shooting incidents by Israeli forces in southern and northern Gaza, though Israel did not comment immediately. The next phase of the U.S.-backed ceasefire remains stalled as Israel demands the handover of the final remains of an Israeli hostage still held by Hamas. Israel has also refused to open the Rafah crossing to Egypt until the remains are returned. Officials say Israel

will not advance the ceasefire until these conditions are met. Hamas and Israel continue to accuse each other of serious breaches.

A Hamas official said Israel has violated the truce over 1,100 times since October, including air strikes, home demolitions, and arrests. Hamas has refused to disarm and maintains control over parts of Gaza, while Israel has warned it will resume military action if peaceful disarmament is not achieved.

Since the truce, over 400 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have been killed, along with three Israeli soldiers. The conflict traces back to the October 7, 2023, Hamas assault on Israel, which killed around 1,200 people and led to 251 abductions. Gaza's health ministry reports that more than 71,000 Palestinians have died in Israeli operations since then, underlining the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the fragile nature of the ceasefire.

QUICK READ

Police Recover 55 Grams of Stolen Gold from Notorious Thief

Kaup

Kaup police have successfully recovered 55 grams of gold stolen by the infamous south Indian thief Umesh Balegar, also known as Umesh Reddy. The accused, arrested on January 2 in a Kaup case, confessed to burglarizing the home of Raghavendra Kini in Mallaru village on December 4 and selling the stolen gold in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. Under the leadership of Karkala Sub-Division In-Charge DySP Prabhu D.T., a team headed by Kaup Circle Inspector Azmat Ali G. escorted the suspect to Madurai. Based on his disclosure, they located and seized the 55-gram gold bar. Officers and personnel from various police stations collaborated in the operation.

Horticulture Department to Host Fruit-Flower Exhibition

Udupi

The Horticulture Department is organizing a fruit and flower exhibition in connection with Republic Day celebrations from January 25 to 27 at Raitha Seva Kendra, Shivalli Horticulture Farm in Doddannagudde. Priority for stalls has been given to those engaged in horticulture activities and sellers of organic products. Various nursery operators, seed vendors, fertilizer dealers, horticulture-related entrepreneurs, machinery sellers, banks, and food stall owners can book 100 square feet stalls at Rs. 3,500 each. Interested parties wishing to set up stalls must make payments online via QR code to the Raitha Seva Kendra account by January 20. Those desiring to register may contact the Assistant Director of Horticulture at phone number 9741255168, as stated in a release from the office of the Joint Director of Horticulture.

Two Charred to Death as Car Overturns and Catches Fire

Honnavar

A devastating accident claimed two lives late Tuesday night near Sulemurki Cross in Gerusoppa, Honnavar taluk. The car overturned and immediately caught fire, resulting in both occupants being burnt alive. The intensity of the blaze reduced the vehicle to ashes, leaving the bodies charred beyond recognition. Preliminary observations suggest the car may have struck a tree before falling into a ditch. Even the number plate melted in the inferno. Police and fire service personnel rushed to the spot and initiated efforts to identify the vehicle and the deceased individuals.

Back-to-Back Tipper Accidents Spark Public Fury in Kundapura

Days after Shetrakatte crash exposed uninsured tipper, another fatal collision in Koteshwara claims life; demands intensify for speed governors on heavy vehicles.

KUNDAPURA

Public outrage continues unabated in Kundapura following the recent Shetrakatte bus-tipper collision that injured many, as yet another tipper-related fatality struck on Wednesday in Koteshwara.A two-wheeler rider lost his life in the fresh mishap, amplifying concerns over rampant illegal operations of heavy vehicles across the district, including Kundapura and Byndoor.

Investigations into the Shetrakatte incident revealed the offending tipper lacked both insurance and transport permits, fueling accusations of widespread violations involving sand, soil, and red stone haulage without proper documentation or speed controls.

Citizens demand proactive measures from the district administration, urging coordinated drives by transport authorities, police, and the Department of Mines and Geology to impound undocumented tippers district-wide.Operating heavy vehicles without permits or insurance has become brazen, locals lament, hoping these tragedies finally prompt administrative action.

Over the past six years in Kundapura sub-division alone, 1,753 accidents claimed 357 lives: 236 crashes and 76 deaths in 2025 (partial data), 300 accidents and 62 fatalities in 2024, 333 incidents and 59 deaths in 2023, 362 cases and 62 losses in 2022, 260 accidents and 49 deaths in 2021, plus 257 mishaps and 49 fatalities in 2020. Primary causes include excessive speed, negligent driving, unscientific road works, and hazardous bends.

Frustrated residents have begun intercepting tippers in places, confronting drivers over reckless behavior. A recent incident in Byndoor saw youth blocking and reprimanding one such vehicle.Calls grow louder on social media for immediate installation of speed governors on all mining-related tippers.

District Superintendent of Police Hariram Shankar announced plans to mandate speed governors on all vehicles transporting mining materials like sand, soil, and red stones, citing persistent accidents due to excessive speed and negligence.

Monkey Fever Resurfaces in Uttara Kannada

A young man from Honnavar's Salkod and an 80-year-old woman from Siddapur's Heruru admitted to hospitals as KFD cases rise to 14 across malnad districts.

HONNAVAR

Monkey fever, or Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), has reared its head earlier than expected this year in Uttara Kannada district. A youth from Salkod in Honnavar has been hospitalized at the taluk facility after testing positive.

Additionally, an 80-year-old woman from Heruru in Siddapur is receiving treatment at Sirsi hospital.

Two years ago, the Health Minister promised a vaccine for this season, but officials now indicate another two years are needed. For 35-40 years, the disease has tormented the malnad region annually, afflicting thousands and causing hundreds of deaths, yet no specific cure exists. Critics charge the government with failing to curb it effectively.

December alone saw 12 cases in Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga districts. Adding the two from Uttara Kannada brings the total to 14, spread across a wide area.With months remaining until the monsoon ends, the threat looms over malnad areas.

The Health Department has distributed repellent oil for application on hands and body as a precautionary step and conducted door-to-door awareness drives.Since about 90 percent of the population resides in forest-covered zones, exposure to tick-carrying monkeys remains high, and no targeted medicine is available.

Until now, only Shivamogga hosted a testing laboratory. This year, one has been sanctioned for Sirsi and needs to commence operations soon.Free treatment arrangements exist at taluk and district hospitals for affected individuals, with critical cases referred to Manipal's Kasturba Hospital.

Tagore Beach Museums Draw Record Crowds

KARWAR

Visitor numbers have surged at the museum featuring the decommissioned INS Chapal warship and Tupolev fighter aircraft on Rabindranath Tagore Beach in Karwar. The exhibits earned an impressive Rs. 5 lakh in revenue during December 2025 alone.

The Tupolev aircraft, retired from Indian Air Force service, was transported from Chennai and installed beside the Chapal museum two years ago. District in-charge Minister Mankal Vaidya inaugurated the aircraft museum on August 15, 2025.

Post-inauguration, income has doubled. According to sources, the single-month figure of 14,000 tourists in December stands out as particularly notable.Year-end and New Year festivities further amplified arrivals.

Prior to the aircraft display, visitors could only view the warship externally, attracting 300-400 daily.A combined ticket for both museums costs Rs. 50 per person.School children continue to enjoy a concessional rate of Rs. 10, a policy that will persist to encourage educational tours. With school excursions resuming, Uttara Kannada—renowned for tourism—expects more student groups. The reduced fee supports this accessibility.

BJP leader highlights Cong reluctance to fund reformed initiative, emphasizing anti-misuse measures and customizable projects for rural upliftment by 2047.

Pratap Simha Mocks Congress Over Funding Fears for Renamed Rural Jobs Scheme

MADIKERI

Former Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha has taken a satirical jab at the Karnataka Congress government, suggesting their lack of objection to renaming the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme stems not from agreement but from dread over meeting the increased 40% state funding requirement under the new 'Vikasit Bharat – Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission Guarantee (VB GRAM G)'.

Addressing reporters in Madikeri, he pointed out that should the administration fail to roll out the program, the central authorities would need to explore other options. He stressed that genuine concern for public welfare would drive proper execution, but if neglected, the BJP plans to assume power in two-and-a-half years and deliver it effectively.

Under the previous framework, the center covered 90% of costs while states handled 10%. The updated version shifts this to 60% central and 40% state responsibility, a change aimed at ensuring equal accountability and curbing misuse.The initiative now encompasses 266 types of works, allowing states flexibility to tailor them to local needs.

Simha highlighted past issues like fraudulent job cards leading to funds being siphoned without actual work, or payments disbursed without labor. The revised system eliminates such loopholes through mandatory morning and evening photographs of workers, weekly reporting, and timely audits.

He recalled that the UPA government launched the original scheme in 2008 with positive intentions, but accumulated flaws and exploitation prompted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's team to introduce reforms, including the name change. Dismissing claims of dishonor to Mahatma Gandhi, he noted the center's respect through programs like Swachh Bharat and Gandhi's portrait on currency notes.

Simha said that the scheme aligns with building a developed India by 2047, but the state appears troubled by the funding obligation and stringent safeguards against irregularities, prompting their resistance. Simhathen urged the government to cease misleading tactics and halt guarantee schemes that drain resources even for basic infrastructure like road repairs.

The press interaction included BJP district president Ravi Kalappa, former MLAs K.G. Bopaiah and M.P. Appachu Ranjan, ex-MLC MP Sunil Subramani, and party general secretary Kishore Kumar.

Pejawar Seer Urges Centre to Act on Bangladesh Hindu Atrocities

UDUPI

Sri Vishwaprasanna Tirtha Sripada of Pejawar Math has expressed profound shock over the ongoing brutal atrocities against minority Hindus in Bangladesh.In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the seer urged the central government to act without delay and take all possible diplomatic measures to stop such acts in the neighbouring nation.

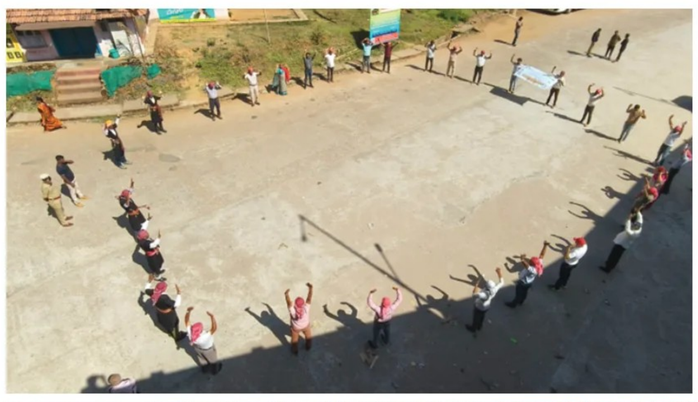
He highlighted that the Hindu society has always responded for the welfare of humanity worldwide and never resorted to violence to dominate others. Hindus have practiced principles of peace and coexistence beyond limits.

Yet, witnessing demonic and inhuman assaults, murders, and rapes on Hindus in a neighbouring country has deeply pained India's Hindu community.While India generously provided refuge and protection to former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina amid her country's political crisis, the subsequent suffering of Hindus there remains tragic.

The seer, also a central committee member of Vishwa Hindu Parishat, pressed for swift arrangements to ensure protection and peace for Hindus in Bangladesh.Additionally, to pray for an end to the deadly violence against Hindus there, justice for the deceased, speedy relief for victims, and peace worldwide, Sri Vishwaprasanna Tirtha has called upon every Hindu household, math, and temple across the nation to light an extra lamp alongside the regular one on January 10.

CNC Organizes 23rd Human Chain in Bhagamandala for Codava Rights

MADIKERI



The Codava National Council (CNC) conducted its 23rd human chain awareness program in Bhagamandala, rallying for Codava community demands. CNC Chairman N.U. Nachappa, presiding over the event, alleged ongoing attempts over the past 40 years at Hampi University to undermine authentic Codava history through biased workshops.

He claimed efforts portray Codavas negatively, omitting their contributions to Kodagu and the nation, influenced by certain intellectuals. Such distorted narratives are being presented as official history to Kannada culture department and state archives.

Nachappa cited recent erroneous statements by the revenue minister on Jamma land legislation as stemming from this misinformation.CNC plans district-wide campaigns from January 2026 to demand Codava Land and counter false historical narratives.

The program emphasized separate 'Codava' enumeration in the upcoming 2026-27 16th national census to secure constitutional rights. Key demands include Codava Land geo-political autonomy, UN recognition of indigenous peoples' rights for the animistic Codava community, inclusion in ST list, special parliamentary and assembly representation similar to Sikkim's Sangha seat, and permanent preservation of ancestral land rights and religious-cultural gun rights.

Nachappa described Codavas as an ancient, indigenous, animistic, single-ethnic community native to Codava Land since humanity's dawn, intertwined with nature worship without sub-castes, conversions, or missionary affiliations.

He urged separate code and column for Codavas in the census's ethnic data collection. Criticizing opposing forces spreading misinformation that separate identification would strip protections, he warned against groups perpetually deceiving Codavas. Historical references from 1871-1931 censuses recorded Codavas as non-religious and non-caste race/tribe, affirming their distinct identity.

Participants swore oaths in the name of revered deities—Guru-Karona-Surya-Chandra, Jaladevi Kaveri, Parvata Devi, Prakriti Devi, Bhudevi—and the sacred Constitution to support CNC's struggle.

The program concluded with the national anthem Jana Gana Mana. Numerous community members participated, including Kaliyanda Meena Prakash, Lt. Col. B.M. Parvathi, and others.

Running for a Pension at 85: Vasu Kotian's Fight for Dignity

UDUPI

At an age when most people struggle even to walk, 85-year-old Vasu Kotian has spent the last two years travelling between offices, writing letters, and pleading with officials for a family pension that remains elusive.

Kotian's wife, Varija Kotian, served as a teacher at Vidyadayini Primary School, Surathkal, for 36 years before retiring in 2013. She passed away in January 2023 after receiving pension for a decade. On March 23, 2023, Kotian applied for family pension through the Block Education Officer, Mangaluru, who forwarded the file to the Accountant General with a clean recommendation.

What followed was silence — broken only by objections. The AG office questioned why Varija had not named a nominee, demanded a joint photograph, and later asked for original pension papers. Kotian complied every time. He submitted applications thrice, sent seven reminder letters, and personally visited the AG office in Bengaluru eight times.

In one instance, a registered letter was addressed to Varija Kotian after her death. The postman returned it as her signature was required. "That letter itself shows how casually my case was handled," Kotian says.

In January 2025, Kotian sought help from the Human Rights Protection Foundation, Udupi, which took up the matter formally. On August 11, 2025, the AG office finally wrote to the District Treasury, Mangaluru, asking for pension details to sanction family pension. Despite three reminders, the pension has not been released.

The Foundation notes that laws are clear: even if a nominee is missing, family pension must be granted to eligible heirs. A survivor certificate issued by the Tahsildar, Mangaluru, names Kotian and two children, both above 40, making him the rightful beneficiary.

The Foundation has escalated the issue to the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, warning that Kotian's ordeal resembles the case of Sheethalakshmamma, who died decades ago without receiving her pension after four years of struggle.

"This time, we will not let the system win," the Foundation said.

Head Constable Dies by Suicide at West Traffic Police Station

SHIVAMOGGA

A head constable attached to the West Traffic Police Station, adjacent to Doddapete station in Shivamogga, died by suicide by hanging late Tuesday night. The deceased has been identified as Mohammed Zakriya (55).

He had been on leave for several days and resumed duty only three days ago. Sources indicate he performed duties near Shivamogga bus stand the previous night before returning to the station. Zakriya was discovered hanging in the cell area at the rear of the station building.

Senior officials, including District Superintendent of Police Nikhil B., visited the spot. SP Nikhil B. responded to the incident, stating Zakriya suffered from health problems. A death note forwarded in a WhatsApp group allegedly mentioned alleged harassment by station staff.

The family has been informed of the suicide. An inquiry will proceed once they file a formal complaint, he added.

POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF KARNATAKA'S LONGEST SERVING CM

The Making of a Chief Minister: Siddaramiah's Journey

CM Siddaramaiah always thinks about the welfare of the poor and downtrodden

The Social Justice Vision of Siddaramaiah

On January 6, 2026, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah became the longest-serving Chief Minister in Karnataka's history, surpassing the tenure of the late D. Devaraj Urs — a leader widely hailed for championing backward classes and social justice. Siddaramaiah's political journey, deeply rooted in grassroots mobilisation, social equity, and inclusive governance, reflects a powerful blend of AHINDA politics (an acronym in Kannada for Alpasankhyataru — minorities; Hindulidavaru — backward classes; and Dalitaru — Dalits) and welfare-oriented public policy — aimed at uplifting historically marginalised communities. Siddaramaiah never compromises when it comes to the welfare of poor and downtrodden irrespective of their caste, colour or religion. According to him, poverty is the enemy of everybody and it must be banished at any cost. This social commitment has made him a mass leader.

At the heart of Siddaramaiah's thought lies AHINDA politics — not merely as an electoral strategy but as a philosophy of empowerment and social conscience. He has persistently argued that AHINDA should not be viewed as a "vote bank" but as the "conscience of the nation." This reframing pushes beyond political arithmetic into a moral narrative of inclusion — one that insists backward classes, minorities, and Dalits must be recognised as key stakeholders in India's democratic development, not peripheral partners. His ideological stance builds on the belief that true democratic justice is achieved only when historically disadvantaged groups — socially, economically, and politically — gain parity in opportunity and representation.

Egalitarian and Rational Society

Siddaramaiah has frequently stated that education is essential for self-respect and social change — a view rooted in the idea that inequality persists when opportunities remain inaccessible. His speeches emphasise that caste and economic disparity can be challenged only through equitable access to education and resources for all communities.

The CM also advocates for scientific temper and rational thinking as tools to dismantle regressive social structures like casteism and superstition — asserting that a truly egalitarian nation requires both intellectual clarity and social empowerment.

Siddaramaiah's public discourse also stresses that unless caste goes, there won't be equality — reinforcing his push against structural social hierarchies. AHINDA-Centric Welfare & Policy Programmes.

The Challenges Confronting Siddaramaiah's Social Justice Project

- **Communal Mobilization:** Unlike Urs's era, contemporary India sees dominant castes organizing on communal lines, stalling implementation of social justice initiatives.
- **Limited Central Support:** Unlike Urs's alignment with the central government, Siddaramaiah operates with a center ideologically opposed to explicit backward class empowerment.
- **Dominant Caste Resistance:** Lingayats and Vokkaligas, traditional power-holders in Karnataka, have resisted every significant policy aimed at distributing opportunity beyond their communities.
- **Uneven Implementation:** While welfare scheme expenditure is unprecedented, the deeper structural transformation Urs achieved through land reforms remains incomplete.
- **Caste Census Controversy:** Implementation of recommendations faces resistance from educated, articulate dominant-caste groups who see themselves as disadvantaged.

Ideological Distinctiveness

What sets Siddaramaiah apart from many contemporary politicians is his blend of grassroots AHINDA politics with forward-looking policy solutions — combining social justice with data-driven governance and public welfare investments.

Where some leaders view caste and minority welfare solely through electoral advantage, Siddaramaiah frames AHINDA as an ethical pursuit — one that seeks to align democratic governance with constitutional promises of equality.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's political philosophy is defined by his dual commitment to AHINDA and inclusive governance. Breaking the record of D. Devaraj Urs is symbolic not only of his longevity but of his ability to keep social justice at the centre of public policy in Karnataka.

His legacy so far has been one of expanded welfare schemes, targeted programmes for minorities and backward communities, scholarships and hostels, educational access, and rhetoric geared toward a more equitable society.

The future of Karnataka under his continued leadership points to a reinforced focus on inclusion, economic parity, and equity — with AHINDA not merely surviving, but influencing the larger political discourse beyond state boundaries.BOXPopular Quotes Reflecting Siddaramaiah's Thought Here are some widely quoted positions that capture his ideological core:

"Let us remind the country that AHINDA is not a vote bank. It is the voice of India's conscience." — on AHINDA's national significance.

"Preferential treatment is given to AHINDA to ensure social justice to the poor by focusing more on social welfare schemes." — on why targeted help matters.

"True development is possible only when economic equality is achieved." — on linking welfare with growth.

"Education is essential for self-respect and social change." — on foundational empowerment.

During his tenure (2013-2018 and 2023-till date), Siddaramaiah has implemented or championed a variety of welfare and social justice programmes with an AHINDA focus:

Social and Economic Guarantee Schemes

Siddaramaiah's government is known for its annually funded Guarantee Schemes — welfare programmes that provide benefits (e.g., subsidised food, pensions, and employment guarantees) to vulnerable populations. These schemes aim to directly empower poor families irrespective of religion, while still benefiting large numbers of AHINDA communities.

Minority Welfare Allocations

In the 2025-26 budget, the Karnataka government announced Rs 1,000 crore under the Chief Minister's Minority Colony Development Programme, support for simple marriages, strengthening Urdu medium schools, and funding for career guidance and minority youth startups. These initiatives reflect extra emphasis on removing structural barriers facing minority groups and promoting access to education and economic opportunities.

Hostels and Educational Support

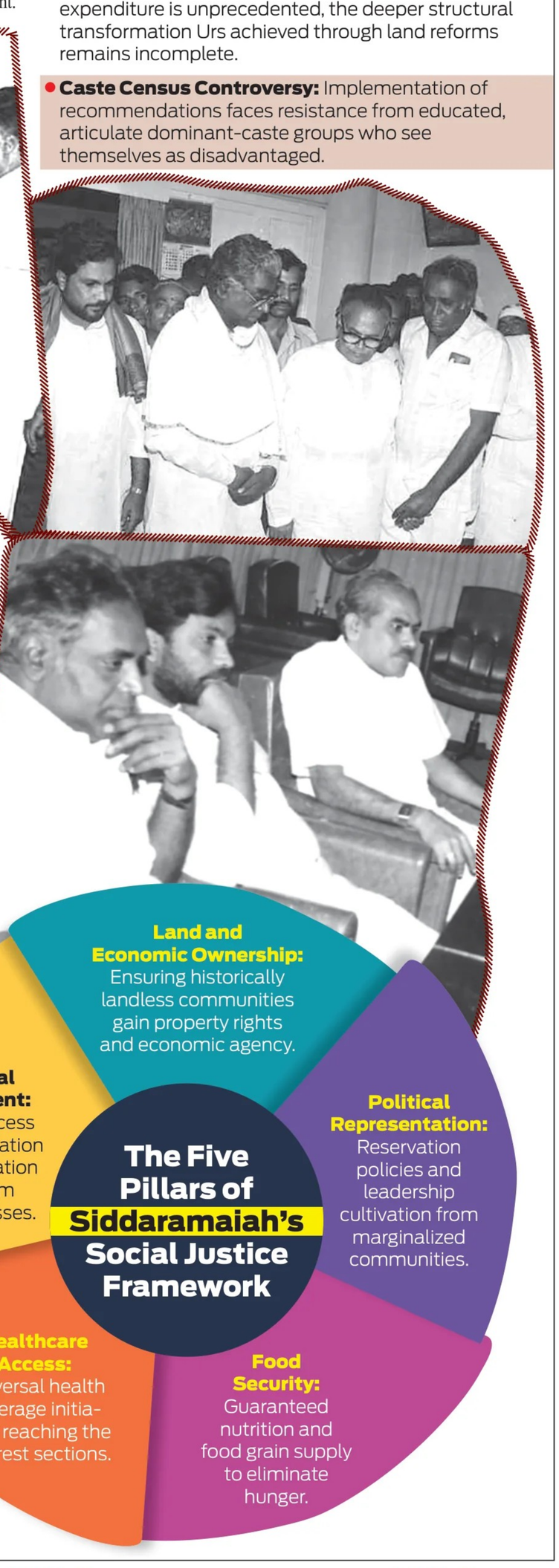
Historically, Siddaramaiah's governments introduced hostels for marginalised communities (including minority students, Dalits, SCs, STs, and OBCs) — aiming to improve educational participation and reduce dropout rates. The creation of hostels and extension of educational facilities is symbolic of his belief that access to education is a powerful equaliser.

Socio-Educational Surveys

Under his leadership, Karnataka has undertaken comprehensive surveys of backward classes, intended to provide data-driven policy solutions to improve targeted inclusion and reservation frameworks. Surveys and data evidence illustrate his commitment to not just populist rhetoric but policy grounded in clear socioeconomic insights.

Political Representation for Disadvantaged Groups

Siddaramaiah has also emphasised that political representation is essential for progress — arguing that communities must have a voice not just in welfare policies but in decision-making structures themselves. This reflects a deeper commitment to structural empowerment, not just short-term benefits.



Land and Economic Ownership: Ensuring historically landless communities gain property rights and economic agency.
Political Representation: Reservation policies and leadership cultivation from marginalized communities.
Food Security: Guaranteed nutrition and food grain supply to eliminate hunger.
Healthcare Access: Universal health coverage initiatives reaching the poorest sections.
Educational Empowerment: Expanding access to quality education for first-generation learners from backward classes.
The Five Pillars of Siddaramaiah's Social Justice Framework

As he stands at this historic milestone, having surpassed Devaraj Urs in tenure, the true measure of Siddaramaiah's legacy will ultimately depend not on how many days he served, but on how many lives he lifted from poverty's grip.

QUICK READ

Case Registered for Defamatory Social Media Post Against Sullia MLA

Bantwal

The Bantwal Rural Police have registered a case against an individual for allegedly posting derogatory content targeting the Sullia Assembly constituency MLA on social media. According to the police, the accused has been identified as Sandesha alias Seetharama, a resident of Bantwal taluk. He is accused of circulating a photograph of the Sullia MLA with objectionable captions and spreading false and defamatory propaganda through the social media platform Facebook. Based on a complaint filed in this connection, the Bantwal Rural Police registered a case in Crime No. 03/2026 under Section 352 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Police said an investigation is currently under way. Officials stated that legal action was initiated after the posts were found to be derogatory in nature and aimed at maligning the image of the elected representative. Further details will be ascertained during the course of the investigation, police added.

Bunts' apex Association to Hold Condolence Meet for Vinay Hegde on Jan 9

Mangaluru

The Bunts' (Nadava) Mathru sangha will organise a condolence and prayer meeting in memory of Dr Vinay Hegde, Chairman of Nitte Group of Educational Institutions, who passed away recently, on January 9. The Shraddhanjali and Nudinamana programme will be held at 5 pm at Smt Geetha S M Shetty Hall, Bunts' Hostel, near Sri Ramakrishna College, Mangaluru. Stating this in a press note, Bunts' (Nadava) Mathru Sangha president K Ajith Kumar Rai Malady said that Dr Vinay Hegde had made invaluable contributions to the fields of education and healthcare. He described Dr Hegde as a visionary educationist who transformed the rural village of Nitte into an internationally recognised educational hub. Rai said Dr Hegde, the founder and guiding force behind Nitte University, was also known for his efficient administration and commitment to social development. "Paying tribute to such a distinguished personality through a condolence meeting is our collective responsibility," he said. Members of the community and the general public have been invited to attend the programme and offer their respects.

Thousands Expected for Srimath Sudheendra Tirtha Swamiji Birth Centenary Celebrations: Vedavyas Kamath

MANGALURU

Mangaluru City South MLA Vedavyas Kamath said that elaborate arrangements have been made for the birth centenary Mangala Mahotsava of Jagadguru Paramapoojya Srimath Sudheendra Tirtha Swamiji, to be held on January 11, with thousands of devotees from across the country expected to participate.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Kamath said the celebrations would take place at the Sri Venkataramana Temple, Rathabeedi, in the divine presence of Kashi Mathadheesha Srimath Samyamindra Tirtha Swamiji. He said Srimath Sudheendra Tirtha Swamiji, the 20th pontiff of Kashi Math, guided the Goud Saraswat Brahmin community and society at large for over seven decades through his spiritual vision, social commitment and environmental consciousness.

Kamath said that under the guidance of Srimath Samyamindra Tirtha Swamiji, a series of programmes have been conducted over the last one-and-a-half years as part of the centenary celebrations. These included Ghar Ghar Bhajan, Vyasopasana and Gurugunagana programmes held in homes, institutions, maths and temples across India and abroad, with over 10,000 bhajans conducted so far.

Referring to the Divya Swarna Paduka Digvijaya Yatra, Kamath said the sacred Padukas travelled from Badrinath in the Himalayas to Rameswaram and Thiruvananthapuram, reaching Mangaluru after covering several parts of the country. He said devotees had witnessed positive transformations and spiritual upliftment wherever the Padukas were worshipped.

Highlighting Swamiji's contribution to environmental protection, Kamath said fruit orchards established in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Haridwar reflected his ecological vision. He added that nearly 65,000 saplings were distributed in the past year through temples and organisations in memory of Swamiji.

Kamath said that on January 11, a grand Bhajana Sankirtana Padayatra would begin at 3.30 pm from the Kashi Math branch at Konchady and pass through key city areas before reaching Sri Venkataramana Temple. Cultural tableaux, bhajana mandalis, traditional music and Vedic chants would form part of the procession. Arrangements have been made to provide refreshments to nearly 10,000 devotees en route.

He said the Mangala Mahotsava Sabha would be held at 8.30 pm, during which Srimath Samyamindra Tirtha Swamiji would deliver blessings and tributes, followed by felicitation of achievers. Detailed parking and food arrangements have been put in place to ensure smooth conduct of the event.

Sri Venkataramana Temple Administrative Trustee Adige Balakrishna Shenoy, trustee CA Jagannath Kamath, Dinesh Kamath of Koteshwar, Vasudev Kamath, Raghuveer Bhandarkar, T Ganapati Pai, Prashanth Pai and other leaders were present at the press conference.

Mangaluru Lit Fest on Jan 10–11: City Hosts Thinkers, Diplomats; Meenakshi Jain to Be Felicitated

MANGALURU

Mangaluru will once again take centre stage in India's literary and intellectual landscape as the eighth edition of the Mangaluru Literature Festival is held on January 10 and 11 at the Dr T.M.A. Pai International Convention Centre.

Organised by the Bharat Foundation, the festival will honour Padma Shri awardee and Rajya Sabha MP Meenakshi Jain for her contributions to history and public discourse. The award will be presented on January 10 during the inaugural session.

The festival, which has grown into a matter of regional pride, seeks to promote discussions on the "Idea of Bharat" through literature, culture, geopolitics and media. The inauguration will be attended by prominent personalities including Shatavadhani Dr R. Ganesh, Meenakshi Jain, Captain Brijesh Chowta, Ravi S. (Mythic Society) and Dr Ajakkala Girish Bhat.

A special tribute to legendary writer Padma Bhushan S.L. Bhyrappa will be held through a session titled "Literature Inspired by Bhyrappa", conducted by Shatavadhani R. Ganesh and G.B. Harisha.

Former RAW chief Vikram Sood, diplomats Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj and Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti, senior journalists, filmmakers and writers will participate in panel discussions on global power politics, India's foreign relations, Indian thought, literature, cinema and digital media.

Cultural highlights include a traditional Bombeyata puppetry performance and discussions on books, films and storytelling. A large book exhibition and sale will be open throughout the festival.

Entry to the two-day event is free, offering residents and visitors an opportunity to engage with some of the country's leading thinkers in the heart of coastal Karnataka.

Man Arrested in Gurupura Youth's Suicide Case

MANGALURU

Bajpe police have arrested a man in connection with the suicide of a 20-year-old woman who jumped into the Gurupura river, allegedly after being refused marriage citing caste differences and neglect.

The arrested accused has been identified as Manoj alias Murali Poojary, a resident of Malali (Manel) in Ganjimutt. The deceased, Navya (20), a native of Moodbidri, had been working at a local jewellery exhibition showroom for the past year.

According to police sources, Navya went missing on Monday after meeting a friend. Later, it was confirmed that she had jumped into the Gurupura river and died by suicide. During investigation, police recovered a death note from the spot in which Navya had clearly named Manoj.

Preliminary inquiries revealed that Navya and Manoj had become acquainted through Instagram about a year ago, and their friendship later turned into a romantic relationship. Family members alleged that when Navya insisted on marriage, Manoj began distancing himself from her and eventually refused to marry her, citing caste differences.

Police said the case is being investigated based on the contents of the death note and statements from the victim's family. Further legal action will be taken following detailed investigation, officials added.

Issues of SC, ST and Nomadic Communities Will Be Addressed: Pallavi G

MANGALURU

Chairperson of the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Nomadic Communities Development Corporation Pallavi G, on Thursday said the State government was committed to resolving long-pending issues faced by Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and nomadic communities and ensuring the effective implementation of welfare schemes.

Addressing a press conference after her two-day visit to Dakshina Kannada district on January 6 and 7, Pallavi G said she had reviewed the grievances and development needs of marginalised communities across Belthangady, Sullia, Puttur and Bantwal taluks.

She said that during her visit to Ittilapela in Savanalu village of Belthangady taluk, she interacted with members of the Malekudiya community and took note of their concerns. At Loyila–Putrabailu, she held discussions with members of the Baira community. Responding to their demand for financial assistance for the development of Shri Mahammai Daivasthana, she said funds could be accessed through the Muzrai Department.

Referring to her visit to Gandhinagar 2nd Cross in Loyila village, Pallavi G said the Baira community had highlighted the shortage of bamboo and raw materials required for their traditional basket-weaving activities. She said the issue would be examined in coordination with the concerned departments. A Janaspandana and grievance redressal meeting was also held with members of Baira, Nalike, Ajila, Koraga, Maila, Pambada, Malekudiya and other nomadic communities.

Pallavi G said she had visited Panja in Sullia taluk and interacted with Koraga and Maila community members. She later chaired a review meeting at the Sullia Taluk Panchayat and directed officials to complete the taluk-level Ambedkar Bhavan at the earliest.

She said that during her visit to the Nalike Scheduled Caste colony at Kootelu in Balavadu gram panchayat of Puttur taluk, issues related to caste certificates and drinking water scarcity were raised. Steps would be taken under the multi-village drinking water scheme and for desilting of the well, she said.

Referring to her visit to Kadapikere Scheduled Caste colony in Kolvadu village of Bantwal taluk, Pallavi G said residents had raised concerns about land ownership, road connectivity and basic infrastructure. She said these issues would be taken up with the district administration. She also stressed the need to focus on employment, land rights and healthcare for the Koraga community and called for a study on the declining Koraga population.

'Siri Dhanya' Walkathon Held in Puttur to Promote Millet Consumption

PUTTUR

Hundreds of people participated in a 'Siri Dhanya' (millets) walkathon organised by the Agriculture Department in Puttur town on Thursday to create awareness about the health and nutritional benefits of millets.

The walkathon commenced from Darbe Junction and concluded at the historic Mahalingeshwara Temple, drawing enthusiastic participation from farmers, students, health workers, women's self-help groups and members of the general public. Officials of the Agriculture Department also took part in the event.

The initiative aimed at encouraging people to incorporate Siri Dhanyas — such as foxtail millet, little millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet and sorghum — into their daily diet as healthier alternatives to rice and wheat. Speakers highlighted that millets are rich sources of fibre, iron, proteins, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, making them vital for preventing lifestyle-related diseases.

Participants were informed that millets contain significantly higher nutritional value compared to commonly consumed cereals, offering better immunity, improved digestion and sustained energy. With millets now available in various forms — including flour, semolina, snacks and sweets — adopting them in daily meals has become easier, officials noted.

Daivajna Community Urged to Revive Traditions and Cultural Values

MANGALURU

Pujya Sri Sri Sachchidananda Jnaneshwara Bharati Mahaswamiji, pontiff of the Shankaracharya Samsthana, Daivajna Brahmin Math, called upon the Daivajna Brahmin community to strengthen its age-old traditions and cultural values, stressing that adherence to customs and samskaras was vital to preserving its rich historical legacy. He was addressing devotees at the 'Daivajna Darshana' programme held at the Daivajna Kalyana Mantapa in the city.

Highlighting the community's roots in the Advaita tradition dating back to the Vedic era, the pontiff urged Daivajna Brahmins to show greater commitment to religious practices and actively revive their heritage. He observed that the community had witnessed holistic development after the establishment of a Math and a Kulaguru nearly four decades ago, which had provided spiritual guidance and cohesion.

Emphasising the importance of education and values, he appealed to parents to ensure quality education for children while simultaneously instilling cultural traditions, moral discipline and a spirit of social service. He expressed concern over the gradual decline in family responsibility, social commitment and value-based living among the younger generation, and called for renewed efforts to nurture these ideals. Later, junior pontiff Pujya Sri Sri Sujnaneshwara Bharati Swamiji spoke on the significance of religious and moral values. He stressed the need to reinforce the tradition of respecting elders and to work towards the self-reliance and upliftment of underprivileged sections of society.

Earlier in the day, the pontiffs were accorded a grand Purna Kumbha welcome and taken in a ceremonial procession from Mannagudde to the Daivajna Kalyana Mantapa at Ashoknagar, accompanied by traditional music, bhajana dance performances and colourful tableaux.

Trustees and office-bearers of various Daivajna organisations, including community leaders, social workers and representatives of youth and women's wings, were present. On the occasion, they offered padapuja and paid Guru Vandana to the pontiffs.

A Life Rooted in the Western Ghats: Coastal Karnataka Pays Tribute to Dr Madhav Gadgil

MANGALURU

Environmental activists across Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada districts have expressed deep sorrow over the passing of eminent ecologist Dr Madhav Gadgil, remembering him as a visionary who gave voice, science and moral clarity to the struggle for conserving the Western Ghats.

For decades, the Western Ghats — one of the world's most fragile and unique biodiversity hotspots — found in Dr Gadgil not just a scholar, but a committed defender. His landmark report on the Western Ghats and its carrying capacity became a turning point in India's environmental discourse, challenging unregulated development and calling for people-centric conservation.

Activists recall that Dr Gadgil inspired youths and native environmentalists to unite, document local knowledge and protect nature at the grassroots level. His emphasis on participatory mapping of flora, biodiversity, livelihoods and traditional practices empowered local communities to become custodians of their ecosystems.

"Dr Madhav Gadgil inspired youths and native environmentalists to unite to protect nature and systematically collect information on flora, local life, biodiversity and mapping. Restoration and conservation are mandatory in the Western Ghats, which is a unique hotspot receiving over 4,000 mm of rainfall annually and home to more than 7,500 medicinal plants, besides rare frogs, butterflies, birds and countless other species found in forests such as Kudremukh, Mukambika and Agumbe," said conservationist Dr Amrut Malla, paying tribute to the late ecologist.

Dr Gadgil's deep engagement with coastal Karnataka went beyond policy and reports. He was a mentor and guide to several grassroots biodiversity studies, including the pioneering documentation of Mala village in Karkala taluk of Udupi district. That study, conducted under his guidance, became a model for community-led environmental research. It was released on June 5, World Environment Day, by renowned writer and thinker Dr Kota Shivarama Karanth, who publicly lauded Dr Gadgil's unwavering concern for nature and people.

Environmental groups note that Dr Gadgil consistently warned against ignoring ecological limits, especially in a region prone to floods, landslides and climate stress. His teachings and interactions remain carefully remembered and documented by activists who continue to draw strength from his work.

QUICK READ

Farmers invited to apply for irrigation wells

Chitradurga

The Agriculture Department has invited applications from farmers for agricultural wells under the Krishi Bhagya Yojana for 2025-26. Subsidies are available for wells, polythene covers, diesel, petrol, or solar pump sets, and sprinkler irrigation units. General category farmers can get up to 80% support, while Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe farmers can receive 90%. A wire fence around the well is required. Farmers interested in these facilities can approach the nearest hobli farmer contact center or the office of the Assistant Director of Agriculture. The scheme aims to improve irrigation and boost crop productivity across the district.

Applications open for 6th class residential schools

Chitradurga

The Minority Welfare Department has opened applications for admission to 6th class at Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and Morarji Desai Residential Schools for the 2026-27 academic year. Eligible students from minority communities, including Muslims, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward classes, can apply online through the Seva Sindhu portal. The last date to submit applications is February 10. For assistance, students and parents can contact nearby residential schools or District and Taluk Minority Welfare Information Centers.

K'taka needs Siddaramaiah, says HC Balakrishna

The MLA praised Siddaramaiah's leadership, highlighting his roles and urging capable leadership to strengthen the Congress party organization

RAMANAGAR

MLA HC Balakrishna has said that Karnataka needs the leadership of Siddaramaiah, especially for guiding the party in future elections. He spoke to the media in Magadi while addressing questions about the Chief Minister post and the role of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

Balakrishna said that decisions about the CM post will be taken by the party's high command. "Neither I nor any other MLA can decide who becomes CM. Senior leaders will determine whether Siddaramaiah should continue or DK Shivakumar should be given a chance," he said. He added that a meeting between the CM and DCM may be called soon to discuss the matter.

The MLA praised Siddaramaiah's leadership, noting that the Congress party has entrusted him with key responsibilities. "After joining the Congress, he became CM and Leader of the Opposition. Today, he is the unquestioned master of our house. Our opinion is that capable leadership should be given a chance, which will strengthen the party organization in the coming days," Balakrishna said.

Reacting to the recent shootout during the Bellary banner riots involving a Congress worker, he blamed Janardhana Reddy and his supporters for escalating tensions. "Janardhana Reddy is intelligent, but spreading misinformation is dangerous. We do not harm our own workers. The shooting might have been in self-defense when his supporters attacked with sticks and salt powder. The matter is still under investigation," he said.

Balakrishna questioned why the supporters caused trouble outside MLA Valmiki's program. "When Janardhana Reddy did not visit Ballari, everything was peaceful. Now, after his arrival, the unrest started. He is directly responsible for these incidents," he added.

The MLA's statements underline the party's emphasis on experienced leadership and highlight the ongoing tension in Bellary. His comments also reflect the focus on maintaining discipline and avoiding political conflicts within the party during sensitive times.

K'taka launches online e-auction for liquor licenses

KOLAR

The e-auction covers 569 defunct licenses statewide, including 26 in Kolar-Chikkaballapur, ensuring legal distribution and reducing smuggling, adulteration, and black-market sales

The Karnataka Excise Department has introduced an online e-auction system for defunct and lapsed licenses, aiming to streamline administration, curb illegal trade, and ensure fair allocation. Deputy Commissioner Dr. M.R. Ravi praised the initiative, calling it a historic step in transparency and efficiency.

Dr. Ravi spoke at a training program on the e-auction process, organized for officials and stakeholders. "While increasing government revenue is important, agility in administration and public interest must also be priorities," he said. He noted that such interactions within the department are rare and valuable for improving governance.

The e-auction will cover 569 defunct licenses statewide, including 467 CL2 wine store licenses and 92 CL9A licenses. In the Kolar-Chikkaballapur districts, 26 licenses—15 in Kolar and 11 in Chikkaballapur—are part of the auction. These licenses had been inactive for years, and the new system ensures eligible participants receive them legally, reducing smuggling, adulteration, and black-market sales.

One day workshop planned for legal authorities

CHITRADURGA

The Karnataka State Legal Services Authority and the District Legal Services Authority will jointly organise a one-day workshop for DLSA Presidents and Member Secretaries on January 10. The programme will begin at 10 am and will be held at the Zilla Panchayat Hall in Chitradurga city.

District Legal Services Authority

The workshop aims to strengthen the functioning of District Legal Services Authorities and improve the delivery of legal services to the public. Karnataka State Legal Services Authority Executive Chairman and Karnataka High Court Justice Anu Sivaraman will inaugurate the event. Several senior judges of the Karnataka High Court will take part in the programme.

Justice Anu Sivaraman will deliver the first session from 10 am to 11 am on the topic "Bridging Gaps and Increasing Efficiency of DLSAs." The session will focus on improving coordination and ensuring better access to justice for people, especially the poor and vulnerable.

From 11.15 am to 12.30 pm, Karnataka High Court Justice M.G. Uma will speak on "Accounting and Legal Services Activities," highlighting financial management and record keeping in legal services institutions.

'VBG Ram G Act' Blocks Corrupt Congress Middlemen: Prahlad Joshi

BENGALURU

Union Minister for Food and Public Distribution Prahlad Joshi on Thursday launched a sharp attack on the Congress, alleging that corruption worth ₹11 lakh crore took place under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) during the party's rule. He said the Centre introduced the 'VBG Ram G Act' specifically to curb such large-scale irregularities, a move that has now become "a major problem for the Congress".

Speaking to the media in Bengaluru, Joshi said the new Act leverages artificial intelligence and GPS tracking while also assessing the quality of work executed. "This technology-driven system has given sleepless nights to Congress middlemen who looted public money under MGNREGA. That is why the party is opposing it," he alleged.

Joshi claimed the Congress has not denied allegations of ₹11 lakh crore corruption during its tenure. Referring to a 2013 CAG report, he pointed out that 4.33 lakh fake job cards existed across the country. "Earlier, even JCB machines were used for MGNREGA works. The 'VBG Ram G Act' was introduced to plug such loopholes and end these illegal practices," he said.

Responding to Congress' criticism that a 60-day break for workers would affect agriculture, Joshi questioned whether the party ever provided employment for all 365 days while in power. He alleged that digital payments were absent during the Congress regime and accused the party of agitating now only to safeguard its middlemen.

Joshi further alleged that despite the Centre allocating ₹8.53 lakh crore to the State over the last 10 years, corruption peaked during Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's tenure. "Even 80-year-olds were shown as labourers to siphon off funds," he claimed, adding that the protests were aimed merely at pleasing Rahul Gandhi.

Highlighting the Act's provisions, Joshi said wages must be paid within 14 days or penalties would follow, monitoring has been entrusted to panchayats, and weekly disclosure of work details is mandatory. "With this transparency, 'starched-shirt' middlemen will no longer get money," he asserted.

He also questioned Rahul Gandhi's absence during discussions on the Act and alleged that Congress fears a special investigation in the Hubballi woman assault case, accusing the State government of shielding the police.

Dr. S. Akash inspects Chitradurga Gram Panchayats

CHITRADURGA

Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Dr. S. Akash has directed officials to complete works under the Jaljeevan Mission at the earliest and ensure drinking water reaches every household. He gave these instructions while visiting and inspecting several Gram Panchayats in Chitradurga taluk on Thursday.

During the visit, Dr. Akash reviewed household tap connection works being carried out under the Jaljeevan Mission scheme. He stressed that the project must be implemented properly and without delay so that people receive safe and regular drinking water through pipelines. He told officials to monitor the progress closely and remove hurdles slowing down the work.

The CEO also inspected grey water management works being implemented under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural). He instructed Gram Panchayat officials to clean waste collected in grey water management units every month. He said greater importance should be given to cleanliness and sanitation using funds from the Fifteenth Finance Commission and other available grants.

Dr. Akash visited Doddasiddavvanahalli, J.N. Kote, Gonur and Siddapur Gram Panchayats. He inspected schools, anganwadi centres, primary health centres and village infrastructure. At Doddasiddavvanahalli, he asked officials to maintain cleanliness around the Gram Panchayat office and public toilets.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, BHUVANESWARI M W/o ARUNKUMAR M, R/o 234/20 2nd Cross, Near Sai Baba Temple, Cambridge Layout, Ulsoor, H.A.L II Stage, Bangalore North, Bangalore, Karnataka-560008, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as BHUVANESWARI MURALIKRISHNAN.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, KIRAN MUDDANAPALYA HANUMANTHARAJ S/o M C HANUMANTHARAJ, R/o No 1230, 2nd Floor, 6th Main Road, Near Karnataka Bank, Bharat Nagar, 2nd Stage, B E L Layout, Bangalore North, Viswaneedam, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560091, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as KIRAN HANUMANTHARAJ KARUNAD.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, VINOD KALGHATGI S/o SHRINIVAS M KALGHATGI R/o 277, Madhwashrinivas, 8th Main, 5th Cross, Near Haadi Anajaneya Temple Road, Pramod Layout, Bangalore South, Nayandahalli, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560039, have changed the name of my minor daughter SIRI VINOD KALGHATGI aged 6 years and she shall hereafter be known as ANVITHA VINOD KALGHATGI.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Abhishek L, S/o Lingaraju, Hosapura Hobli, Malavalli Taluk.
My grandmother's original Hakku Pathra dated 23-05-2016, issued by the Tahasildar, Malavalli Taluk, in favour of Smt. Puttagowramma W/o Gendaiah, in respect of the property bearing Sy. No. 28, measuring 40 × 25 feet, the said property situated at Hosapura Hobli, Malavalli Taluk, Mandya District, was lost on 01-01-2026 in a Xerox shop at Malavalli. In this connection, I filed a complaint before the Consent Police Station, and in this connection, an endorsement was issued on 08-01-2026.
If anyone traces the said document, please intimate me or the said Police within 7 days.
By M. Guruprasad, Advocate
No. 2, M. Lingaiah Building
V. V. Road, Mandya – 571401
Mob: 9242221603

बैंक ऑफ़ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda
West of Chord Road Branch
No 12,1st Main Road, 2nd Stage, West of chord Road, Bengaluru 560086, Ph: 080-23495941/080-23495553
Email: vjwcro@bankofbaroda.com

LOCKER OPEN NOTICE

This is the information of our valued patrons who have taken lockers on rent at below mentioned **Bank of Baroda, West of Chord Road Branch, Bangalore** and have committed breach of agreement. The notices sent as per RBI / Bank's guidelines to the renters at their recorded addresses have been returned undelivered stating either person/s addresses not found or left. Efforts to contact the locker holders in person at their present whereabout could not be ascertained. Thus, having no alternative, the notice is given to the persons named below for contacting branch and to clear the dues of the Bank within a period of 15 days, failing which the bank will proceed to Break Open the Locker at their cost, risk and responsibility and the Bank will exercise its right to lien for recovery of outstanding rent cost and other charges.

BRANCH : West of Chord Road Branch

Locker Holder Name	Locker Number	Outstanding Balance	Break Open Date & Time
Sujatha Y Shetty W/o Yathindranath Shetty K, 102, 2nd Main 2nd Stage, West of Chord Road, Bangalore -560086.	8996BX0040 Old No 0B52SO0073	Rs.14750/-	10.04.2026 1.30 PM

Date: 09.01.2026
Place: Bangalore
Sd/- Authorised Officer
Bank of Baroda

PANCHAYATHRAJ ENGINEERING DIVISION
Bangalore South District Panchayath,
Office of the Executive Engineer, Ramanagara.

Tender Notification No.: 31/EE/PRED/RMG/JE/ 1603-1610/2025-26 Date : 08-01-2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Only through E-procurement System)

The Executive Engineer, Panchayathraj Engineering Division, Bangalore South District Ramanagara, invites the Itemwise Tender. Contractors registered in **KPWD,** Enrolled in **PRED / PWD** for the Works under Deferent Head of Account.

1) Tender Minimum Amount Rs. 16.00 Lakhs. Tender Maximum Amount Rs. 100.00 Lakhs. 2) Tender Last Date for Submission of Tender Dated : 16-01-2026 by 4.00 p.m. 3) Opening of the Tender Dated : 17-01-2026 (KW-II, KW-III, KG-II) at 4.30 p.m., 4) Opening of the Financial Tender Dated : 19-01-2026 (KW-II, KG-II) at 4.30 p.m., 5) Opening of the Financial Tender Dated : 30-01-2026 (KW-III) at 4.30 p.m., on wards.

For details & further information visit the **Website : https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or Contact this Office in Office hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
P. R. E. Division, Ramanagara,
Bangalore South District.

DIPR/Ramanagar/552/Manipal/2025-26

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN ORDER TO MAKE INDIAN FARMING GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE, M/S. COCREATE GLOBAL TECHNOLOGIES PRIVATE LIMITED BRINGS YOU THE FOLLOWING 100% WATER SOLUBLE FERTILIZERS AS PER THE ORDER DATED 24/10/2015, IN PURSUANCE OF NOTIFICATION NOS. S.O. 1909 (E), 28TH DAY JULY, 2014 AND OTHER FOLLOWED BY S.O. 2009 (E), 24TH OCT 2015, ISSUED BY MINISTERY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE (FERTILIZERS CONTROL ORDER 1985) GOVT OF INDIA.

100% WATER SOLUBLE MIXTURE FERTILIZER	100% WATER SOLUBLE MIXTURE FERTILIZER (NPK Grades)
■ Potassium Nitrate (13-0-45)	■ N:P:K (00:44:44)
■ Mono-Potassium Phosphate (0-52-34)	■ NPK-B (10:54:10-0.02)
■ Calcium Nitrate	■ NPK-S (0:9:46-15)
■ Mono Ammonium Phosphate (12:61:0)	■ NPK-S (16:8:32-2)
■ Urea Phosphate (17:44:0)	■ NPK-S (11:44:11-2)
■ Potassium Magnesium Sulphate (22% K2O)	■ NPK-S (15:15:30-2)
■ NPK (13:40:13)	■ N.P.K. (12:11:18)
■ NPK (20:20:20)	■ N.P.K. (19-19-19)
■ NPK-Fe (00:42:47-2.8)	

Manufactured & Marketed by:
Cocreate Global Technologies Private Limited
2nd Floor, Building No. 445, 17th Cross Road,
HSR Layout, Bengaluru,
Karnataka – 560102
Phone: 7500783802

District Urban Development Cell, Deputy Commissioner Office, Hassan District.
Telephone No: 08172-234839 Email:pdhassandudc@gmail.com
No:Mun(2)CR/220/202025-26 Date:06-01-2026

: TENDER NOTIFICATION : e-proc No. DMA/2025-26/ BD/Work-Indent No:50202

The Executive Engineer, District Urban Development Cell, Hassan Deputy Commissioner Office, Hassan District, Hassan invites tenders in two cover system using KW-2&3 document from class-1 contractors for CMSMTDP Nagarothana (Municipality) Phase-4 project Hassan District, Town Municipal Council, Sakaleshpur Package works as details below:- Sl. No.Indent Number 1)e-proc No. DMA/2025-26/ BD/Work-Indent No:50202 Description of Work 1.Renovation of Commercial Complex near Old Bus Stand, Construction of Welcome Board to High Way, Sign Boards to Ward Areas, Development of Anganavadi Building in W.No.11, Renovation Of Library in W.No.7, Construction High Tech Bus Shelter near Old Bus Stand, Renovation Of Hemavathi Commercial Complex Building and Development of Park near Oxford School in W.No.12 and Construction of Anganawadi Building in W.No.14 in Sakaleshpura TMC limits (General) (Rs.155.26) 2.Drain works in ward 10 Manjunatha house lakkappa house muddu house shekar house ward 11 manjula raju house sweepers colony kadappa house ward 23 janaki house shridhar house annappa house puttaraju house ward 10 siddurappa house and in ward no 4 7 11 23 SCP (Rs.69.98) Tender Amount (Rs.in Lakhs)Rs.184.92 Interested contractors shall register on the e-procurement platform to participate in this tender. Contractors can download the tender documents from the E-Procurement platform (www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in). Tenders shall be submitted electronically at (www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in). EMD and Tenders Processing Fee shall also be paid electronically Calender of events & other information is as follows:- Calendar of Events and other information are as follows: 1.Period of Construction 06 Months 2.Earnest Money Deposit Rs.2.80 lakhs 3.Last Date for submitting of completed tender documents in E-portal Date: 09-02-2026. upto 17.30 hrs 4.Pre Bid Meeting Date: 31-01-2026 @11.00 A.M 5.Date of Opening of Tenders (Technical Bids) Date: 11-02-2026 at 11.00 AM Any changes in the tender conditions and Postponement of calendar of events (if any) is only through e-Procurement portal and will not be published in any newspapers.

Sd/- Project Director,
District Urban Development Cell, Hassan.

ವಾಸಾಸಂ೨/ಟೆಸನ/ಹಾಸನ/916/ಕೆಎಸ್.ಎಂಸಿಎ/2025–26

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, SHOBHA SARITHA D ALMEIDA W/o JOHNSON D ALMEIDA, R/o 3-472, Yojananagar, Yedthare, Byndoor, Kundapura, Udupi, Karnataka - 576214, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SHOBHA D ALMEIDA in my minor daughter SANCIA D ALMEIDA, aged 16 years in her 10th class educational documents. The actual name of mine is SHOBHA SARITHA D ALMEIDA, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MANASA RANJAN MOHAPATRA** S/o Sudhir Kumar Mohapatra Residing at No.86/1 Flat no 201 Alfa Garden Layout Kodigehalli Village K R Puram Bengaluru -560 036 have changed my name to **MANAS RANJAN MOHAPATRA** Vide Affidavit dated 02/07/2025 before notary R.Basavaraja Bengaluru.

IN THE COURT OF THE HONOURABLE ADDITIONAL DISTRICT JUDGE AT HOSUR
O.S. No. 26/2025

Radhakrishnan ...plaintiff
Respondent / Defendant No.2:
Mrs. Anitha, D/o Late Munireddy, W/o Venu
Residing at KHD Layout,
Surya City, Adhigandhalli Village,
Atibele Taluk, Hobli, Anekal
Bangalore District
...Defendant

NOTICE

Please take notice that the above-named Petitioner / Plaintiff has filed a suit in the Hon'ble Additional District Judge, Hosur Court, seeking specific performance of contract and other reliefs against you, the Defendant No.2, and others.
The above suit is listed for hearing on 09.03.2025 at 10:00 A.M. You are hereby called upon to appear in person or through a pleader and file your objections, if any, before the Hon'ble Court on the said date and time.
Failure to appear or file objections may result in the Court passing orders against you in your absence.

By Order of the Court
S. Balaji, B.Com., M.A., LLB.
Advocate & Notary Public
No. 8, M.G. Road, 1st Floor, Near Head Post Office, Hosur – 635 109, Krishnagiri District
Mobile: 9952348399

QUICK READ

Sixty Booked After Clash At AIMIM Rally

CHHATRAPATI, SAMBHAJINAGAR

Police booked nearly 60 people for rioting after violence broke out during an AIMIM rally on Wednesday. The incident happened in the Jinsi area when former MP Imtiaz Jaleel was leading a foot march to campaign for civic polls. A rival group allegedly tried to attack Jaleel's car. Police used force to control the crowd, but some people threw eggs at policemen. Cases were filed against 13 identified and several unidentified persons.

Supreme Court Defers Electoral Roll Revision Hearing

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday postponed the final hearing on petitions challenging the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls to January 13. The cases question the EC's decision to revise voter lists in several states, including Bihar. A bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant said arguments will continue next week. The Election Commission has maintained it has the authority and duty to ensure only eligible citizens are registered as voters.

Calcutta High Court Seeks Fresh SSC Tainted List

KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court has directed the West Bengal School Service Commission to submit a fresh list of 1,806 tainted candidates with complete identification details. Justice Amrita Sinha said the earlier list lacked key information such as category, school and district of appointment. The court noted that incomplete details could allow tainted candidates to re-enter recruitment. The SSC was asked to publish a detailed list before the next hearing on Feb 11.

Cong Slams Policy Change On Mining Environmental Clearances Rules

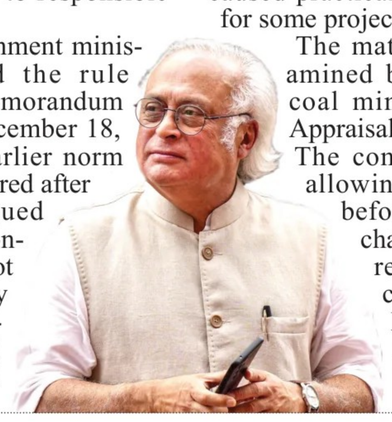
The issue has sparked fresh debate over development priorities and environmental safeguards

NEW DELHI

Congress criticised a new clearance rule, warning it weakens safeguards and harms accountable environmental governance nationwide.

The Congress on Thursday attacked the Union government over a policy change affecting non-coal mining projects. The party said the decision removes a key safeguard linked to environmental responsibility. Under the revised rule, developers can now seek environmental clearance without first proving land acquisition.

Earlier, non-coal mining firms were required to complete land acquisition as per law before applying. Congress general secretary and former environment minister Jairam Ramesh criticised the move sharply. He said meaningful environmental impact assessment is difficult without knowing the full area to be mined. Ramesh called the decision another blow by the Modi regime to responsible governance.



The environment ministry changed the rule through a memorandum issued on December 18, 2025. The earlier norm was reconsidered after requests argued landowner consent should not be mandatory initially. Officials said linking land acquisition status to clearance caused practical difficulties for some projects.

The matter was examined by the non-coal mining Expert Appraisal Committee. The committee felt allowing clearance before land purchase appeared reasonable in certain cases. It noted that mining often begins after clearance while land acquisition continues in phases.

The ministry cleared the change after reviewing expert inputs and earlier rules, noting flexibility may apply elsewhere. Congress warned it weakens scrutiny and transparency, stressing land clarity is vital to assess social and ecological impact. The party urged restoring earlier norms. Opposition leaders said reforms must strengthen safeguards, not dilute them, and sought wider consultation.

Delhi HC Rules Wife Cannot Be Presumed Earning

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday clarified that a wife cannot be presumed to be earning or self-sufficient at the stage of granting interim maintenance. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma made the observation while hearing a plea challenging a family court order that awarded the woman Rs 2,500 per month as interim maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC. The husband claimed his wife worked as a nursery teacher, but he failed to provide any proof. The court rejected his "bald assertion," noting that the woman had studied only up to the 11th standard and had no independent income.

The couple, married in June 2021 under Muslim rites, separated in 2022 after the wife alleged cruelty over dowry demands. She sought an enhancement of maintenance, citing her husband's multiple income sources, including teaching, private tuitions, a grocery shop, and rental income. The husband, however, claimed to earn only Rs 10,000 per month and provided partial bank statements.

The court observed that his claimed income was below the minimum wages applicable to a graduate in Uttar Pradesh, which stood at Rs 13,200 per month. Based on this assessment, the court enhanced the interim maintenance to Rs 3,500 per month and directed the husband to pay arrears within three months. The judgment emphasises that at the interim stage, courts must not assume a wife has the ability to maintain herself without concrete proof.

Kharge Calls Gadgil Death Major Setback Green Cause

NEW DELHI

India's environmental movement lost a guiding force as noted ecologist Madhav Gadgil passed away, leaders said.

Congress leaders on Thursday expressed deep sorrow over the death of renowned ecologist Madhav Gadgil, calling it a serious loss to India's environmental efforts. Gadgil passed away in Pune late Wednesday night after a brief illness.

He was 83 and is survived by his family and a wide circle of students, colleagues, and admirers.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said India has lost one of its strongest voices in ecological inquiry. He noted that Gadgil's work helped convert scientific research into meaningful conservation action, especially in the Western Ghats. Kharge said Gadgil's death was a major setback for the country's green cause and extended condolences to his family and the scientific community.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh described Gadgil as an outstanding academic, field researcher, institution builder, and communicator. He recalled Gadgil's key role in the Save Silent Valley Movement and his important interventions to protect forests in Bastar. Ramesh also highlighted Gadgil's leadership of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, calling its report sensitive, democratic, and unmatched.

Gadgil trained in biology at Harvard under E O Wilson but chose to return to India to build research, mentor students, engage communities, and shape policy, with Ramesh often seeking his guidance as minister.

Gadgil studied biology at Harvard under renowned scientist E O Wilson but returned to India to strengthen research, guide students, work with communities, and influence public policy. Ramesh said he personally sought Gadgil's advice frequently during his tenure as environment minister.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also condoled Gadgil's death, calling him a compassionate voice for nature and social justice. In 2024, the United Nations honoured Gadgil with the Champions of the Earth award for his work on the Western Ghats, recognising his lifelong contribution to environmental protection.

Palaniswami Meets Shah, Rules Out Return Of Expelled Leaders

NEW DELHI

AIADMK general secretary and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on Thursday said he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi to discuss the prevailing political situation in the state. He clarified that there were no talks on alliance or seat-sharing during the meeting.

Speaking to reporters at the New Delhi airport, Palaniswami said he met Shah at his residence on the night of January 7. He explained that he could not meet the senior BJP leader earlier during Shah's visit to Pudukkottai due to prior engagements in Salem and Kallakurichi.

Palaniswami firmly ruled out any possibility of bringing back expelled leaders V K Sasikala and O Panneerselvam into the AIADMK. He said he had repeatedly made his stand clear and questioned why the issue was still being raised. The meeting came on the same day when the Dr Anbumani Ramadoss faction of the PMK formally joined the National Democratic Alliance in Tamil Nadu. Palaniswami said more parties were expected to join the NDA in the coming months.

He stressed that his discussion with Shah focused only on the political situation in Tamil Nadu. He recalled Shah's assurance that the BJP would not interfere in the internal affairs of the AIADMK.

When asked about the possibility of AMMK leader T T V Dhinakaran joining the NDA, Palaniswami said talks were ongoing with some parties. He added that official announcements would be made once decisions were finalised.

Adhikari Calls Banerjee Visit Interference In ED Probe Case

KOLKATA

Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, on Thursday accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of interfering in an Enforcement Directorate investigation by visiting the house of I-PAC co-founder Pratik Jain during an ED raid.

He said the visit, along with the presence of the Kolkata Police Commissioner, was unethical, unconstitutional, and a direct attempt to influence a central agency's probe. Adhikari demanded that the ED take action against the chief minister according to law. Jain is the co-founder of the Indian Political Action Committee, also known as I-PAC, and heads the Trinamool Congress IT cell. The consultancy firm has worked closely with the Trinamool Congress and the West Bengal government after the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The BJP leader recalled earlier instances where Banerjee had visited senior police officials during central agency raids. He cited her visit to the then police commissioner's residence during a CBI raid in 2022 and her sit-in protest when some ministers were detained.

Adhikari said such actions send a wrong message to the people of West Bengal and weaken public trust in constitutional institutions. He warned that failure to act would raise serious questions about fairness and accountability. He also alleged that state police raided his MLA office in Nandigram without a search warrant. Challenging the chief minister, Adhikari said BJP offices could be searched freely, claiming no illegal cash or materials would be found, unlike recoveries made from associates of ruling party leaders. He said the issue reflects misuse of power.

Fadnavis Promises Traffic Relief, Metro Push For Thane Region

THANE

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday outlined a detailed development plan for Thane and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Addressing a chat show organised as part of the BJP campaign for the Thane Municipal Corporation elections scheduled on January 15, Fadnavis promised major relief from traffic congestion and faster completion of Metro projects. He said his government aims to complete key Metro corridors within the next five years to ensure smooth and reliable connectivity.

The Chief Minister said plans were underway to link the Coastal Road into a ring route to divert heavy traffic outside city limits. To ease congestion on Ghodbunder Road, he announced a growth hub at Kolshet-Diva, which will include water taxi services to improve travel options.

Fadnavis assured residents that water shortages would end within three years. He said work on the Poshir and Pelhar dams would be completed within 36 months. The long-delayed Gargai project has cleared environmental hurdles after villages agreed to voluntary relocation, adding 500 MLD water. He added that the Kalu Dam, once operational, would permanently solve water issues across MMR.

The CM said traditional dumping grounds would shut down in three to four years and bio-mining would process solid waste. He also announced a specialised incubation centre in Thane to support innovation and local growth.

On alliances, Fadnavis said the BJP chose to contest with Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena to protect alliance strength.

ONGC Mori-5 Well Fire Gradually Comes Under Control

AMARAVATI

Firefighting efforts at ONGC's Mori-5 well in Andhra Pradesh's Konaseema district continue as the situation gradually stabilises.

The blaze, which began on Monday during repair work using a workover rig, entered its fourth day on Thursday. Crude oil mixed with gas erupted unexpectedly, sending thick smoke over Irusumanda village and surrounding areas, prompting the evacuation of over 500 residents. Officials said all villagers have now returned following improved conditions.

Specialised ONGC teams are working to control the blowout at the well in Malkipuram mandal. Fire intensity has reduced, allowing personnel to move nearly 10 metres closer to the wellhead to execute planned control measures. Fire services continue spraying water to manage temperatures, though complete extinguishment may take several more days. The well is operated by PEC contractor Deep Industries.

ONGC's Crisis Management Team is following the approved blowout control plan. An access road has been constructed behind the well for debris removal, while a water blanket around the site aids safe clearance. Equipment and logistics have been positioned to facilitate systematic operations, including the next phase of capping the well.

Officials reported significant reduction in fire intensity, noise, and surrounding heat. With minimal risk of escalation, the district administration has allowed residents to resume routine activities. The company said focused efforts have made substantial progress.

Several Fall Sick After Drinking Contaminated Water Supply

NOIDA

Several residents of Greater Noida's Delta 1 Sector fell ill after allegedly consuming contaminated drinking water, raising health concerns across the area.

Residents reported symptoms such as vomiting, fever, stomachache, and loose motion after drinking tap water on Tuesday and Wednesday. Some alleged that sewage water was mixing with broken pipelines, particularly in C Block, causing the problem. Rishipal Bhati, a former RWA president, said six to seven families were affected, and similar complaints had been reported from other blocks earlier.

Nearby Beta 1 Sector residents also reported recurring sewage overflows and water leakage issues.

However, officials of the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) denied any mixing of sewage with drinking water. A senior official said tests conducted on water samples found the supply clean. Supply connection issues and minor leaks were identified and fixed immediately. GNIDA CEO N G Ravi Kumar directed random water testing across the city, and additional CEO Sunil Kumar Singh said fresh samples had been collected for testing. Residents and builders have been instructed to clean water reservoirs regularly and report any contamination.

The health department set up a free medical camp in Delta 1 on Wednesday. Chief Medical Officer Narendra Kumar said 23 people were examined, and seven patients suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea received treatment.

HISTORY ROW

AAP Targets Gupta Over Bhagat Singh Remark

NEW DELHI

India witnessed fresh political sparring on history after Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta made remarks on freedom fighter Bhagat Singh that drew sharp criticism from the Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday. AAP alleged that Gupta distorted facts while speaking in the Delhi Assembly by suggesting Bhagat Singh's 1929 bombing of the Central Legislative Assembly was aimed at a Congress government, instead of the British colonial rule. The opposition party shared a video clip of Gupta's speech and accused her of presenting a strange and updated version of history. AAP leaders Saurabh Bharadwaj and Sanjeev Jha mocked the chief minister, saying history now appeared to be in "remix mode". According to AAP, Bhagat Singh was a revolutionary who fought against British rule before independence, and his act in 1929 was meant to awaken the colonial government, not any Indian political party. Bharadwaj said even school children know that the bombing was a protest against the British authorities.

He accused Gupta of embarrassing the nation by showing poor understanding of history. Jha went further and claimed the remark was not just a slip, but a serious attempt to weaken the legacy of revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev.

Jha sarcastically said that such mistakes could soon rewrite other chapters of Indian history. AAP later said the remark appeared to be a slip of the tongue, where "Congress" was said instead of "angrez".

Gupta has earlier faced criticism for public slips in speeches. She was trolled online for confusing AQI with temperature and for wrongly naming Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose during public events. The latest controversy has raised questions about accuracy in governance.

QUICK READ

Bomb Threat Sparks Panic At Rewa Court Premises

REWA

Panic spread across the Rewa district court on Thursday morning after officials received a bomb threat via email. The court administration immediately alerted the district police, prompting swift evacuation of the building, including lawyers' chambers, and judges were moved to a safe location. Superintendent of Police Vivek Singh led a thorough search operation. Bomb disposal teams and dog squads inspected the premises, but no suspicious items were found. The situation is under control.

Bomb Threats Force Evacuation Of Three Odisha Courts

BHUBANESWAR

Three district courts in Odisha—Cuttack, Sambalpur, and Deogarh—were evacuated on Thursday after anonymous emails threatened bomb attacks. Court work was suspended immediately, and local police, bomb disposal teams, dog squads, and cyber experts conducted thorough searches. Odisha Police have increased security at all court premises. Director General of Police YB Khurania said the situation is under close watch, while Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi called for a detailed investigation into the threats.

Hyderabad Police Seize Rs 1.24 Crore Chinese Manja

HYDERABAD

Hyderabad police seized Chinese Manja worth Rs 1.24 crore and arrested 143 people ahead of the Sankranti festival. As part of a strict crackdown, authorities registered 103 cases and confiscated 6,226 bobbins of the banned kite string. Police Commissioner V. C. Sajjanar said the ban aims to prevent risks to humans, birds, and the environment. He warned that illegal sales, storage, or transport of Chinese Manja will face strict action, with special teams monitoring the city.

I Campaigned to Make Modi PM, He is Out to Finish My Party: Uddhav

Shiv Sena leader alleges PM Modi betrayed him after elections and is now systematically undermining the party's organisation and political foundations

MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday launched a sharp attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that despite campaigning for him in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP leader is now attempting to destroy his party.

Thackeray said he felt both sad and angry over the turn of events. "I am sad and angry that I campaigned for Modi ji in 2014 and 2019. Even after helping him twice, he broke my party," he said, referring to the split in the Shiv Sena and the subsequent political developments in Maharashtra.

Thackeray said he had openly supported Modi's prime ministerial candidature in the past and urged people to back him. "I was saying that he should be made the prime minister. Now, he is saying that I should be finished," the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader remarked, adding that people have begun to recognise this contradiction.

He further alleged that the BJP harbours an "old dream" of separating Mumbai from Maharashtra, a charge the party has consistently denied in the past. According to Thackeray, the BJP believes it has weakened the Shiv Sena following recent political and legal setbacks. "They think Balasaheb Thackeray is no longer there and that they have finished the Sena on paper. But they cannot finish it on the ground," he asserted.

Recalling the period when Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray was alive, Uddhav said the BJP's conduct was different then. "You must have seen that till 2012, when Balasaheb was there, they were 'seedhey' (straight)," he said, suggesting that political behaviour has deteriorated since.

When asked whom he holds responsible for what he described as falling standards in politics, Thackeray avoided naming an individual. "More than a person, it would be the behaviour — like the behaviour of the BJP," he said.

His remarks come amid shifting political equations in Maharashtra, including recent announcements of alliances and renewed debates over the future of regional parties in the state's political landscape.

Owaisi Alleges Mosque Property Demolished In Delhi

CHHATRAPATI, SAMBHAJINAGAR

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday alleged that a portion of a Waqf-owned property of a mosque in Delhi was demolished during an anti-encroachment drive near Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Ramlila Maidan. The drive, on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, led to violence with stone-pelting injuring five police personnel, prompting tear gas action.

Owaisi blamed the Delhi Waqf (Amendment) Act, calling it a "black law" used to seize Muslim religious properties. He said the Delhi High Court wrongly passed orders on the mosque, ignoring a 1970 Gazette notification declaring it Waqf property, and added the matter would now be taken to the Supreme Court.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi alleged part of a Waqf-owned mosque in Delhi was demolished, calling the Waqf Act "black law" and promising to challenge it in court.

Addressing a rally for Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar civic polls, he urged voters to oppose Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, and protect religious sites. He emphasized the Constitution's Preamble, freedom of faith, and the right of Muslims to worship Allah, criticizing celebrations that ignored Dr B.R. Ambedkar's principles of liberty.

Maharashtra AIMIM president Imtiaz Jaleel said the party faced internal divisions in previous elections but vowed to fight on two fronts in the municipal polls. Both leaders condemned attacks on AIMIM members and promised strict action. Owaisi added he would personally visit the affected area and stand firm, asserting he would not be intimidated by threats or violence.

The Supreme Court has reserved its judgment on Justice Yashwant Varma's challenge to a parliamentary inquiry's constitutionality

Supreme Court Reserves Verdict On Justice Varma Plea

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a plea by Allahabad High Court judge Yashwant Varma, who is challenging the legality of the parliamentary panel investigating corruption allegations against him. A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and SC Sharma heard senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Siddharth Luthra for Varma, while Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented both houses of Parliament.

Varma's counsel questioned the procedure followed in forming the panel, citing the Judges (Inquiry) Act of 1968, which empowers only the Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman to admit a motion for removing a judge. Mehta defended the panel's constitution, stating that once motions are admitted in both houses, the inquiry committee is validly constituted. The case traces back to March 14, when burnt currency notes were found at Justice Varma's official residence in New Delhi, leading to his repatriation from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court. Following an in-house inquiry by a three-member committee appointed by then Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Varma was found guilty of misconduct. After he declined to resign, the report was forwarded to the President and Prime Minister, initiating impeachment proceedings.

Subsequently, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla admitted a multi-party motion on August 12 and formed a three-member parliamentary inquiry committee comprising Supreme Court and High Court judges along with a senior advocate. Justice Varma has challenged the Speaker's action, the admission of the motion, and all consequential notices, arguing the process violates the Judges (Inquiry) Act and is unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court's reserved verdict will decide the validity of the parliamentary panel and shape the procedure for judicial accountability in India.

J&K Govt To Adjust Medical Students Via Supernumerary Seats

JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said the government will accommodate students affected by the closure of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Medical College by adjusting them in other institutions through supernumerary seats, ensuring their education does not suffer. Abdullah said the affected students had cleared the NEET examination lawfully and deserved placement. "It is our legal responsibility to accommodate them. We will adjust them by creating supernumerary seats in colleges close to their homes," he added. Supernumerary seats are additional seats over the intake approved by authorities.

Abdullah acknowledged the long-term impact of shutting down the medical college. "Out of 50 seats, 40 were taken by Muslim students and objections were raised.

If the college had expanded to 400–500 seats, hundreds more students from Jammu could have benefited," he said. He also criticized political opposition, saying, "Aspirants across the country struggle to secure medical seats. We received a fully built college and yet got it shut down due to protests."

Addressing inspections by the National Medical Commission (NMC), Abdullah questioned the university authorities.

Indian Agencies Warn Rising Exfiltration From Kashmir Regions

NEW DELHI

Indian intelligence agencies have flagged a renewed attempt to lure people from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan. Officials say such exfiltration was widespread in the 1990s and is now resurfacing in targeted areas.

Recently, Poonch Police attached properties of Pakistan-based terror handlers Rafiq Nai and Jamal Lone. Both are accused of aiding infiltration and persuading locals to move into PoK and Pakistan. Lone, who had previously crossed over, is said to be involved in anti-India activities. Officials noted that Pakistan wants more J&K locals in PoK for roles including narcotics smuggling and guiding terrorists into J&K.

The Intelligence Bureau observed that propaganda is being spread through mosque announcements and social media, promising money and better livelihoods to lure youth. While the scale is smaller than in the 1990s, officials warned that these efforts could become serious if not checked. Many past crossovers later regretted their decision, and India has facilitated their safe return through rehabilitation programs.

Following the Pahalgam terror attack, India launched Operation Sindoor, curbing infiltration from Pakistan. The ISI has since shifted to using home-grown terror modules and local Over Ground Workers (OGWs), including women. Current attempts are mainly in the Poonch-Rajouri sector, where locals' knowledge of terrain makes them ideal terror guides. Agencies have intensified crackdowns on such elements, including property seizures. Officials said the action is expected to continue, aiming to stop exfiltration and disrupt ISI's wider plans.

GAUHATI BAR ASSOCIATION BEGINS THREE-DAY HUNGER STRIKE PROTEST

GUWAHATI

Members of the Gauhati High Court Bar Association (GHCBA) began a three-day hunger strike on Thursday to protest the Assam government's plan to relocate the Gauhati High Court to North Guwahati. The demonstration aims to intensify opposition to the proposed judicial township at Rangmahal. The strike is scheduled for six hours each day and started at 10 a.m. in front of the old High Court building in Uzan Bazar. The government has proposed a new High Court complex within a judicial township spanning 129 bighas (over 42.5 acres) on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River. The foundation stone for the project is to be laid on Sunday by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, an event the Bar Association has decided to boycott. In a statement, the GHCBA described the hunger strike as a "peaceful and democratic expression" of its opposition to moving the principal seat from central Guwahati. The association said its general body has consistently opposed the relocation in formal resolutions and a member referendum. Advocates have been urged to respect the collective decision and refrain from attending the ceremony. The Assam Cabinet approved Rs 479 crore in November for the first phase of the judicial township. Officials say the relocation is part of a broader Brahmaputra riverfront development, requiring the current High Court land at Uzan Bazar. Currently, the Gauhati High Court operates from a historic building and a modern complex across Mahatma Gandhi Road, connected by an underground tunnel with escalators.

SOMNATH DEVOTION

Somnath Temple Draws Millions Every Year

GANDHINAGAR

Somnath Temple, one of India's foremost Jyotirlingas, attracts nearly one crore devotees annually due to its rich spiritual and civilisational heritage. The temple, which survived multiple foreign invasions over centuries, has regained its glory and is now among India's top 10 most searched destinations online.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who chairs the Shri Somnath Trust, the temple has entered a 'Suvarna Yug' or golden era over the past two decades. 2026 also marks a millennium since Mahmud of Ghazni's attack in January 1026, underscoring its enduring legacy. The temple is set to celebrate 75 years of its inauguration with the 'Somnath Swabhimaan Parv'.

Somnath's grandeur includes 1,666 gold-plated kalash atop the Shikhar and 14,200 dhwajas, reflecting faith and artistry. Annual rituals draw millions: Bilva Pooja saw 13.77 lakh devotees, while Maha Shivratri 2025 alone attracted 3.56 lakh worshippers. The Light and Sound Show, launched in 2003, and the 2025 Vande Somnath Kala Mahotsav have revived historical traditions and cultural performances.

Connectivity upgrades have made pilgrimages easier. The Jetpur–Somnath four-lane highway, Sabarmati–Veraval Vande Bharat Express, and reopened Keshod Airport, along with Rajkot International Airport, now provide faster access. Somnath's digital presence continues to expand, with 1.37 billion social media impressions in 2025, enabling devotees worldwide to participate in rituals through online booking and postal prasad. The temple remains a living example of faith, blending tradition and modernity while attracting millions each year.

Delhi demolition drive violence: Six more held; total arrests now stand at 11

NEW DELHI

A day after a court-ordered anti-encroachment drive triggered clashes and stone-pelting in central Delhi's Turkman Gate area, six more arrests have been made in connection with the violence, which left police personnel injured.The total number of arrests made in the matter now stands at 11, including the apprehension of a juvenile.Those arrested on Thursday have been identified as, Afaan, Adil, Shahnawaz, Hamza, Atharr and Ubed, all are residents of the Turkman Gate area."We have arrested six more people. So far total of 11 people, including one juvenile, have been apprehended," Additional Commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan told. He said that adequate deployment of police personnel and paramilitary forces has been made in the area to maintain law and order and prevent any untoward incident. Officers are closely monitoring the situation, he added.An anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Delhi's Ramlila Maidan area on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday triggered violence as many people pelted stones at police personnel, injuring five of them, including the area's station house officer.

Trouble brewed when a social media post claimed the mosque, opposite the Turkman Gate, was being demolished during the anti-encroachment drive, and people started gathering there, police sources said.They claimed that 150 to 200 people were involved in the pelting of stones and glass bottles at the police and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) workers.MCD Deputy Commissioner Kumar Kumar had said around 36,000 square feet of encroached area was cleared during the drive. A diagnostic centre, a banquet hall and two boundary walls were demolished during the drive that went on through the night, Kumar had said.

QUICK READ

Vietnam warns of prolonged dengue fever outbreak

Hanoi

Vietnam's Ministry of Health has warned of a complicated dengue situation and the risk of a prolonged outbreak, a Agency reported on Thursday. The country recorded more than 181,000 dengue fever cases in 2025, including 36 fatalities, the ministry said. Nguyen Trong Khoa, deputy director of the ministry's Department of Medical Service Administration, cautioned that the outbreak could extend into 2026. He said localities must not be complacent and should prepare dengue prevention and control measures for 2026. Dengue (break-bone fever) is a viral infection that is spread from mosquitoes to people. It is more common in tropical and subtropical than in temperate climates.

Mongolia sees surge in measles cases

Ulan Bator

Mongolia's measles tally surged to 13,861 after 8 new local infections were reported in the past 24 hours, the country's National Centre for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) said on Thursday. More than half of new measles infections were among school-age children who have had only one shot of the measles vaccine, the NCCD said in a statement. In this regard, the NCCD suggested that parents protect their children from a potentially severe disease by getting them two doses of the measles vaccine. Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. It spreads easily when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes. It can cause severe disease, complications, and even death.

Another journalist held under Peca sent to prison

Islamabad

A Pakistani magistrate has sent journalist Muhammad Aslam Shah to prison on judicial remand a day after he was arrested by National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) in a case lodged under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) 2025, local media reported on Thursday. The case was registered against Shah on December 29 after Tabish Raza Husnain, said to be an official of Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC), filed a complaint against him under Section 20 (offences against the dignity of a natural person) and Section 24 (cyberstalking) of Peca, Pakistan's leading daily Dawn reported.

Islamist-Backed Panel Sweeps Jagannath University Union Polls

An Islamist-backed student panel secured a decisive victory in Jagannath University elections, triggering political debate and opposition protests.

DHAKA

The just-concluded Central Students Union elections at Jagannath University have delivered a sweeping mandate to Odommo Jobian Oikko, a panel backed by the student wing of the radical Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Chhatra Shibir. According to local media reports published on Thursday, the panel secured an overwhelming 16 out of 21 posts in the Jagannath University Central Students Union (JnUCSU), including all top positions.

The victorious panel captured the influential posts of Vice-President (VP), General Secretary (GS), and Assistant General Secretary (AGS), consolidating its dominance in the student body. The results were officially announced in the early hours of Thursday by JnUCSU Chief Election Commissioner Mostafa Hasan, as reported by leading Bengali daily Prothom Alo.

Riazul Islam of the Odommo Jobian Oikko panel won the Vice-President's post with 5,558 votes, defeating AKM Rakib of the Chhatra Dal-backed Oikkoboddho Nirbhik Jobian panel, who polled 4,688 votes. Abdul Alim Arif secured the General Secretary position with 5,475 votes, comfortably ahead of Chhatra Dal-backed candidate Khadizatul Kubra, who received 2,023 votes. Masud Rana won the Assistant General Secretary post with 5,020 votes, defeating Atikul Islam Tanzil, who secured 4,022 votes.

The opposition alliance, backed by the student wing of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Gono Odhikar Parishad's Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, managed to win only five posts, underscoring the scale of the Islamist-backed panel's victory.

This outcome follows a broader trend across Bangladeshi campuses. Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed candidates have recently dominated student and hall union elections at several major universities, including Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University, and Chittagong University. The group had earlier also dominated the first-ever JnUCSU election.

However, the results have not been without controversy. In September last year, several student leaders rejected the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) election outcome, alleging a planned fraud after Shibir-backed candidates swept key posts. Similar allegations resurfaced during the Jagannath University polls, with multiple candidates claiming electoral irregularities.

Islamist alliance in turmoil as Jamaat, Islami Andolan clash over seats

DHAKA

As Bangladesh heads towards the February election, the task of finalising a seat-sharing arrangement has become increasingly complicated within the radical Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance, deepening uncertainty within the newly announced coalition, local media reported on Thursday. Both Jammat and Islami Andolan Bangladesh are reportedly fielding candidates in over 240 overlapping constituencies.

Jamaat and Islami Andolan two of the largest Islamist groups in the country had been engaged in talks for over three months to consolidate Islamist votes under an alliance of eight predominantly Islamist parties.

Despite extended negotiations, the talks failed just short of the December 29, 2025, nomination deadline, prompting both parties to submit nominations in hundreds of seats, triggering turmoil within the alliance.

According to the Election Commission data, Jamaat filed nominations in 276 seats on the final day, while Islami Andolan submitted nomination papers in 268 seats.

The data revealed that Jamaat and Islami Andolan candidates are set to contest against each other in at least 240 constituencies nationwide, including seats contested by senior leaders of the parties.

Reports suggest that the Chattogram district has the highest overlap, with 49 constituencies featuring rival candidates from the two parties.

Sri Lankan lawmaker Namal Rajapaksa highlighted India's leadership as vital for regional cooperation and South Asia's lasting stability.

Namal Rajapaksa Emphasises India's Central Role

COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Member of Parliament Namal Rajapaksa on Thursday underlined the importance of India's leadership in maintaining long-term peace and stability across the South Asian region, calling for deeper regional cooperation amid evolving global and regional security challenges.

In a detailed post on social media platform X, Rajapaksa said South Asia is witnessing an increasingly complex security environment that demands collective action. He noted that recent global developments, combined with internal political instability in several South Asian nations, have heightened the urgency for coordinated regional responses. According to him, India is uniquely positioned to play a central role in fostering unity and cooperation among neighbouring countries.

Rajapaksa pointed out that in recent years, countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have experienced periods of political turmoil marked by public unrest, leadership transitions, and institutional uncertainty. He alleged that, at times, such disruptions were encouraged or exploited by extremist elements, posing serious risks to democratic stability and regional security.

Addressing these challenges requires a collective commitment to counter extremism, prevent political violence, and safeguard minority rights, Rajapaksa wrote. He stressed that fragmented responses are insufficient in the face of shared threats, adding that South Asia must develop greater regional coherence to withstand emerging crises and respond effectively to common challenges.

Emphasising India's role, Rajapaksa said New Delhi's political weight, economic capacity, and diplomatic influence place it at the centre of any meaningful regional security framework. He argued that India's leadership is essential not only for crisis management but also for shaping a long-term vision of stability, democratic resilience, and inclusive growth across South Asia.

The Sri Lankan MP also drew attention to upcoming elections in Bangladesh and Nepal, describing them as a hopeful opportunity to reaffirm democratic legitimacy through free and fair electoral processes. He said credible elections in these countries would strengthen public trust in democratic institutions and contribute positively to the region's overall security environment.

With aligned goals focused on growth and stability, South Asia as a whole can project greater influence internationally, Rajapaksa noted, adding that regional unity remains crucial for long-term peace and coherence.

Iran's Judiciary Warns of No Leniency as Protests Intensify

TEHRAN

Iran's top judicial authority, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, has warned of zero leniency for anyone accused of aiding enemies of the Islamic Republic as Iran faces its most intense protests in nearly three years. Speaking to state media, he alleged the unrest was fuelled by foreign actors, specifically the United States and Israel, and said those involved in riots or public disorder would be punished without exception.

The warning follows remarks by US President Donald Trump, who said Washington would intervene if peaceful protesters were killed, and comments by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu supporting Iranian demonstrators. The protests began last month in Tehran's Grand Bazaar over the collapsing rial and have since spread nationwide, driven by economic hardship, sanctions, unemployment, and public discontent. Army chief Amir Hatami also warned of decisive military responses to foreign threats.

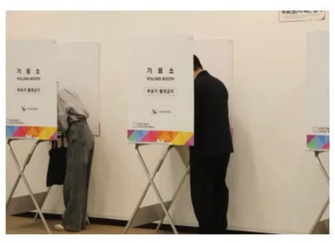
ELECTION LAW FALLOUT

SC Ousts Two Ruling Party Lawmakers Over Election Law Violations

SEOUL

Two lawmakers belonging to South Korea's ruling Democratic Party (DP) lost their parliamentary seats on Thursday after the Supreme Court of South Korea upheld lower court rulings finding them guilty of violating election-related laws.

The top court confirmed a fine of 7 million won (approximately $4,800) against Representative Yi Byeong-jin for underreporting his assets during the April 2024 parliamentary elections, in which he won a seat in the National Assembly. Under South Korean law, any lawmaker convicted of breaching the Public Official Election Act and sentenced to a fine of 1 million won or more automatically loses their seat.



Yi was indicted in October 2024 for failing to declare several assets during his election campaign. Prosecutors said the omissions included approximately 70 million won worth of stocks and details related to land he owned in the central city of Asan, which had been used as collateral for loans. Yi was also accused of omitting his name from official records when jointly purchasing the Asan land with an acquaintance in 2018.

In addition to the election law violation, the Supreme Court upheld a separate fine of 5 million won against Yi for breaching the Act on Real Name Financial Transactions and Confidentiality, which mandates the use of real names in all financial dealings. The combined rulings made Yi ineligible to retain his parliamentary mandate.

In a separate case, the court upheld a lower court ruling involving Representative Shin Yeong-dae, resulting in his removal from office. The decision stemmed from the conviction of Shin's former campaign manager, surnamed Kang, who was sentenced to one year in prison, suspended for two years, along with 120 hours of community service.

By law, a lawmaker's election is invalidated if their campaign manager receives a prison term or a fine of 3 million won or more for election-related offenses.

JSMM Chairman Shafi Burfat Accuses Pakistan Military of Masking Failures

BERLIN

Shafi Burfat, Chairman of the Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz (JSMM), has launched a strong attack on the Pakistani military establishment, accusing it of shielding its own incompetence by repeatedly blaming neighbouring countries for Pakistan's internal crises.

In a series of remarks shared on social media platform X, Burfat said that statements issued by the military's media wing, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), targeting India and Afghanistan, reflect not the behaviour of a responsible state institution but what he described as deep psychological insecurity within Pakistan's power structure.

According to Burfat, the Pakistani military has, over decades, normalised falsehood as an instrument of governance. He alleged that ISPR functions as a narrative industry designed to conceal what he termed systemic failures, including political manipulation, economic exploitation, enforced disappearances, and the militarisation of society. One lie inevitably breeds another, Burfat wrote, adding that the military's communication strategy is aimed at misleading both domestic audiences and the international community.

The Sindhi leader further accused the Pakistan Armed Forces of reducing the state to what he called a captive entity, claiming that politics, media, the judiciary, and the economy are all held hostage by military interests. He alleged that corruption has hollowed out national institutions, pointing to unaccountable defence budgets, vast real-estate ventures, and sprawling business empires controlled by military-linked entities. In his statement, Burfat described the armed forces not as a professional national institution, but as a corporate cartel in uniform.

Sindhi nationalist leader Shafi Burfat sharply criticised Pakistan's military, accusing it of institutionalised deception and repression.

Burfat also highlighted what he characterised as systematic brutality by the Pakistani military against unarmed civilians across different regions of the country. He claimed that communities such as Sindhis, Baloch, and Pashtuns have borne the brunt of repression, while those responsible continue to evade accountability at the international level.

The comments come amid growing criticism from nationalist and rights groups regarding the military's dominant role in Pakistan's political and economic life. While the Pakistani military has consistently rejected such allegations, Burfat's remarks underline the persistence of dissenting voices that challenge the official narrative promoted by ISPR and the state.

S. Korea Moves to Disband Defence Counterintelligence Command After Martial Law Controversy

SEOUL

South Korea's defence ministry has announced plans to seek the dissolution of the Defence Counterintelligence Command, a powerful military unit embroiled in controversy over former President Yoon Suk Yeol's failed attempt to impose martial law in December 2024. If completed, the move would bring an end to the command after 49 years of operation, marking the first time it has been fully dismantled since its establishment in 1977.

According to officials the command is suspected of having played a central role in the short-lived martial law bid. Its former commander is currently standing trial for allegedly deploying troops to the National Assembly and the National Election Commission on the night the emergency measure was declared. The alleged deployment has raised serious concerns about the misuse of military intelligence units in domestic political affairs.

The Defence Counterintelligence Command has long been criticised for its outsized influence within South Korea's military and political system. Over the decades, it has been renamed several times under different administrations in response to public scrutiny and reform demands. However, despite these changes, the core structure and functions of the organisation have remained intact until now. The current proposal represents the most far-reaching reform of military counterintelligence since the country's democratisation.

Hong Hyun-ik, chief of a special reform committee tasked with reviewing the command, said the panel had advised a constructive dismantling of the organisation. We have advised the dismantling of the Defence Counterintelligence Command and the transfer or removal of its existing functions, such as security investigations, counterintelligence and security audits, Hong said during a briefing.

The committee, which includes military officers, government officials and civilian experts, also recommended the creation of a new, more narrowly defined organisation. According to Hong, this proposed body would specialise in counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and intelligence related to the defence and arms industry, with stricter oversight mechanisms to prevent political misuse.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	4			9	6			8
3					4			2
	8		3	7		4		
	5			8			2	
7		4	2		1	8		9
2		8		6			5	
	1			4			8	
8		7	9		5	6		1
	6			2			3	

8	9	1	7	6	4	5	2	3
5	4	6	3	1	2	7	8	9
3	2	7	9	8	5	1	6	4
9	8	4	2	5	3	6	1	7
2	7	3	6	4	1	9	5	8
6	1	5	8	7	9	3	4	2
7	5	2	4	9	6	8	3	1
4	6	9	1	3	8	2	7	5
1	3	8	5	2	7	4	9	6

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

QUICK READ

UIDAI launches Aadhaar mascot 'Udai' to simplify public communication

New Delhi

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on Thursday launched the Aadhaar mascot -- a new resident-facing communication companion to simplify public understanding of Aadhaar services. The Aadhaar mascot named 'Udai' will be helpful in making Aadhaar-related information more relatable, and people-friendly, said the Ministry of Electronics and IT. Bhuvnesh Kumar, CEO, UIDAI said that by inviting people for designing and naming this mascot through an open national competition, UIDAI reaffirmed a core principle of Aadhaar: participation builds trust and acceptance.

Sensex, Nifty end lower as India-US trade tension fears spook investors

Mumbai

Indian equity markets witnessed their sharpest fall in a month on Thursday as benchmark indices extended losses for the fourth straight session, weighed down by rising concerns over India–US trade tensions. Investor sentiment turned cautious after reports suggested that the administration of US President Donald Trump could consider imposing steep tariffs of up to 500 per cent on Indian goods. The possibility of such harsh trade measures triggered widespread selling across sectors, leading to broad-based risk aversion in the market.

AI hype reversal could bring back FIIs to India creating huge upside

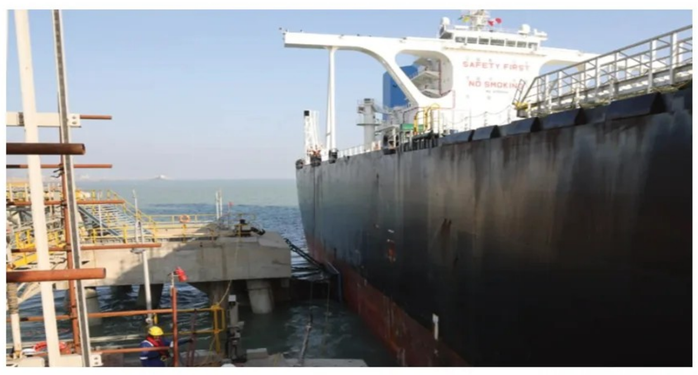
New Delhi

A reversal of the artificial intelligence (AI) hype could bring India back into focus for large global investors, a report said on Thursday. The report from Bay Capital said much of the global AI infrastructure build out is debt funded, echoing risks last seen in the telecom fibre boom. It also cited a finding that despite $30–40 billion in enterprise investment into generative AI, 95 per cent of organisations are getting zero return. India's market composition viewed today as a disadvantage in the AI-obsessed investment landscape may prove optimal when the AI hype ends.

Mundra Port Makes History as India's First to Berth Fully Laden VLCC

Adani Ports' Mundra Port achieved a milestone by berthing India's first crude carrier.

AHMEDABAD



In a landmark development for India's maritime and energy infrastructure, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) on Thursday announced the successful berthing of India's first-ever fully laden Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) at Mundra Port in Gujarat. The achievement marks a transformational moment in the country's crude oil logistics and strengthens India's position on the global maritime and energy map.

The vessel, Mt New Renown, carrying a total cargo capacity of 3.3 lakh cubic metres of crude oil, docked directly at Mundra's VLCC berth at full load. With this operation, Mundra became the first port in India capable of handling a fully laden VLCC directly at a jetty, a feat achieved by only a limited number of ports worldwide due to the extreme draft, displacement, and advanced infrastructure such vessels require.

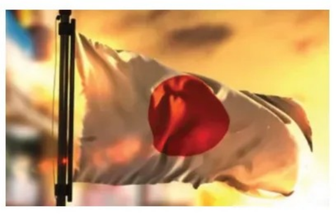
According to APSEZ, the berthing operation was executed under challenging marine conditions, including strong currents, high winds, and demanding sea states. The successful handling of the vessel highlighted the operational expertise, coordination, and technical capability of the APSEZ marine team and port management. The company described the event as a demonstration of world-class port operations and safety standards.

A key strategic advantage of Mundra Port's VLCC capability is its seamless connectivity to the HPCL Rajasthan Refinery at Barmer. A 489-kilometre crude oil pipeline links the port directly to the refinery, one of India's most important refining assets. This direct connection significantly enhances India's energy security by enabling efficient large-scale crude imports, improving supply chain resilience, and supporting economic growth across Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The ability to berth fully laden VLCCs directly at the jetty represents a major shift away from traditional offshore Single Point Moorings (SPMs) or lightering operations, which were previously required for such large vessels. Eliminating these intermediary processes allows for safer, faster, and more cost-effective crude handling, while reducing operational risks and turnaround times.

Japan Lodges Diplomatic Protest Over China's Drilling Rigs in East China Sea

TOKYO



Japan has protested China's offshore drilling activity in the East China Sea, reviving long-standing maritime tensions.

Japan has formally lodged a diplomatic protest with China over the operation of mobile drilling rigs in contested waters of the East China Sea, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Tokyo said the rigs were operating on the Chinese side of the Japan–China median line, an area that remains highly sensitive due to unresolved maritime and resource disputes between the two neighbours.

The protest was submitted through diplomatic channels last Friday after the Japan Coast Guard issued a navigation warning regarding the movement of Chinese vessels in the area. Japanese officials believe the activity is linked to exploratory drilling for a new natural gas field, a development that has raised concerns in Tokyo about unilateral resource exploitation.

The East China Sea has long been a flashpoint in Japan–China relations. Although the drilling rigs are reportedly operating on China's side of the median line that separates the two countries' claimed exclusive economic zones (EEZs), Japan maintains that such actions undermine earlier bilateral agreements and could affect shared resources beneath the seabed.

In 2008, Tokyo and Beijing reached an agreement to jointly develop gas fields in the East China Sea as a confidence-building measure. However, Japan has repeatedly accused China of constructing multiple drilling facilities on its side of the median line without mutual consent. Tokyo argues that unilateral development contradicts the spirit of the joint development agreement and risks escalating regional tensions.

The latest dispute comes amid already strained bilateral ties. Earlier this month, China's Ministry of Commerce of China announced an immediate ban on exports of all dual-use items to Japan, citing national security concerns. Dual-use items include goods, software, and technologies intended for civilian use but which can also be repurposed for military applications. Japan criticised the move as excessive and damaging to economic and technological cooperation.

BMW Group India clocks highest-ever car sales of 18,001 units in 2025

NEW DELHI

BMW Group India on Thursday delivered its best-ever annual performance in 2025, recording highest car sales of 18,001 units, a strong 14 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth that outpaced the average growth rate of India's luxury car segment. The robust performance highlights rising demand for BMW and MINI vehicles despite a challenging and competitive market environment.

Out of the total sales, BMW accounted for 17,271 units, while MINI sold 730 cars during the year. In addition, BMW Motorrad delivered 5,841 motorcycles in 2025, the company said.

The company also posted its highest-ever quarterly performance in the October–December period, with Q4 car sales touching 6,023 units, up 17 per cent from a year ago. BMW Group India said it has now delivered record sales for four consecutive years, supported by strong brand loyalty and growing aspiration among Indian luxury car buyers.

Every month and every quarter in 2025 saw the company post its best-ever sales numbers, with growth consistently higher than the overall luxury segment. The company sold 3,753 electric vehicles in 2025, marking a sharp 200 per cent jump over the previous year.

Move aims to simplify regulations, allow flexibility, strengthen investor protection, and improve ease of doing business

SEBI Overhauls Stockbroker Rules, Replaces 1992 Regulations to Ease Compliance

MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has comprehensively revamped its stockbroker regulations, replacing the three-decade-old 1992 framework with a simplified and modern regulatory structure. The overhaul is aimed at improving ease of compliance and ease of doing business while ensuring stronger investor protection and better risk management.

The new regulations feature simplified language, clearer definitions, and the removal of outdated and repetitive provisions. SEBI has reduced the regulatory text from 59 pages to 29 and nearly halved the word count, making the framework easier to read and understand. Several obsolete references, including those related to physical share delivery, the Forward Market Commission, and sub-brokers, have been removed.

A key change allows stockbrokers to undertake activities regulated by other financial authorities such as the RBI, IRDAI, PFRDA, IFSCA, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and the IBBI, subject to conditions. These activities will be governed by the respective regulators, ensuring clarity and avoiding regulatory overlap.

The regulations are structured into 11 chapters, covering underwriting, code of conduct, reporting obligations, and permitted activities. SEBI has also rationalised criteria for identifying qualified stockbrokers, bringing entities with large client bases or high trading volumes under enhanced supervision.

While brokers may offer incidental investment advice, full advisory services will continue to be governed by the SEBI Investment Advisers Regulations, 2013. On underwriting, SEBI capped obligations at 20 times a broker's net worth and restricted earnings to agreed commissions.

The reforms follow SEBI board approval last month and align with its broader ease-of-doing-business initiative.

Hindustan Zinc shares crash over 6 pc, stock hits six-month low

MUMBAI

Hindustan Zinc shares came under heavy selling pressure on Thursday, as the stock fell more than 6 per cent to Rs 588.35 on the NSE. This marked its steepest single-day fall in the last six months. The sharp decline was largely driven by a sudden correction in silver prices, which dampened investor sentiment across the metal sector after a strong rally last year.

The sell-off was not limited to one stock, as the entire metal pack traded in the red during the session. The Nifty Metal index slipped around 3.5 per cent, with Hindustan Zinc emerging as the biggest laggard among its peers.

The stock opened lower at Rs 623 and continued to slide through the day, hitting its lowest level since June 18. With Thursday's fall, Hindustan Zinc has now lost about 8.5 per cent in just two trading sessions.

The decline has also wiped out its early 2026 gains, pushing the stock down nearly 3.4 per cent so far this month. The weakness in silver prices is a key concern for the company, as silver plays a major role in its earnings.

Silver contributed around 41 per cent to Hindustan Zinc's earnings before interest and taxes in the first half of FY26, compared with about 28 per cent in FY23. Any sustained fall in silver prices could therefore have a direct impact on the company's operating performance.

Silver prices, which had powered Hindustan Zinc shares to a strong 38 per cent rally in 2025, have cooled off sharply in recent sessions due to profit booking. Investors are also staying cautious ahead of important US economic data that could influence the interest rate outlook of the US Federal Reserve.

On the domestic front, silver futures for March delivery on MCX fell by another Rs 10,000 per kilogram on Thursday to an intra-day low of Rs 240,605.

BJP credits PM Modi's vision as India estimated to grow 7.4 pc in FY26

NEW DELHI

As India's economy is estimated to grow at 7.4 per cent in the financial year 2025–26, the BJP on Thursday attributed the projected growth to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision and hard work. However, Opposition parties dismissed the claims, asserting that the ground reality paints a very different picture and alleging that the economy is in distress. Speaking to IANS, BJP National General Secretary Tarun Chugh said that despite global challenges and uncertainties, India continues to make rapid progress under Prime Minister Modi's leadership.

Despite tariff tensions, global instability, Operation Sindoor, and anti-India campaigns based on lies and misinformation run by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on both international and domestic platforms, India is moving ahead at a strong pace. This growth rate reflects Prime Minister Modi's vision and hard work, he said. Chugh further said that the Prime Minister has provided significant relief to the people through reforms in GST slabs and Income Tax.

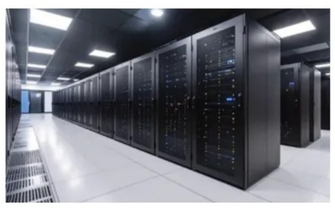
The country witnessed two occasions to celebrate Diwali due to economic relief and prosperity. Now, no one can stop India from becoming Aatmanirbhar and achieving the goal of a Viksit Bharat, he added.

The Opposition, however, strongly countered the BJP's claims.

RJD spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwari said that while GDP growth figures may appear encouraging, they do not reflect the lived reality of ordinary citizens. GDP growth is one thing, but the condition of the poor and common people is entirely different. There is a huge gap between these figures and reality. The pockets of the poor are empty, people are distressed, and common citizens are suffering, he said. Congress MP Pramod Tiwari echoed similar concerns, questioning the government's narrative of economic strength.

India's data centre capacity more than doubled

NEW DELHI



India's data centre capacity additions more than doubled in 2025, reaching 387 MW IT from 191 MW IT added in 2024 thus marking a robust year-on-year growth of 103 per cent, a report showed on Thursday. On the demand side, data centre absorption rose to 427 MW IT in 2025 from 407 MW IT in the previous year, registering a 5 per cent annual increase.

Mumbai and Chennai led absorption, together accounting for 70 per cent of the total at 427 MW IT, driven by hyperscalers amid rising cloud adoption, AI workloads, 5G rollout, and IoT demand, according to Savills India's new report.

The market is projected to triple to over 4 GW IT by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 23 per cent. MW IT capacity refers to the electrical power (Megawatts) a data centre facility can provide for its IT equipment. Capacity additions surged 103 per cent year-on-year to 387 MW IT from 191 MW IT in 2024, pushing operational stock to 1,520 MW IT — a 34 per cent increase — led by Mumbai (34 per cent supply share), Delhi-NCR (20 per cent), and Chennai (19 per cent).

Hyperscale data centres dominate growth fuelled by global hyperscalers, domestic cloud players, and institutional investors, while enterprise colocation sustains demand alongside edge data centres in Tier 2 and 3 cities, said the report.

Emerging markets like Visakhapatnam, Kolkata (48 per cent CAGR projected), and Hyderabad (44 per cent CAGR) gain momentum from policy support, cost advantages, undersea cables, and low-latency needs for 5G/IoT.

MOTIVATED FATALISM CRITICISED

Hardeep Singh Puri Defends India's Democratic Debate

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday asserted that while India's democracy thrives on debate and criticism, it does not benefit from what he described as motivated fatalism propagated by certain so-called experts. In a strongly worded post on social media platform X, Puri said that sections of commentary appear to be guided more by political bias than academic rigour or factual scrutiny.

As we step into 2026, public debate in India should begin with a little New Year discipline, not by packaging insinuations, assumptions and shoot-and-scoot assertions as economic analysis, the minister wrote. He argued that in recent years, a distinct genre of commentary has emerged that reduces complex reform processes to caricatures and treats every imperfect transition as evidence of permanent failure.

Puri said the criticism often follows a familiar pattern, making sweeping claims that India's official data sets are unreliable, that economic growth does not benefit the poor, that crony capitalism dominates policymaking, or that India lacks the capacity to manufacture at scale. The refrain is familiar and sweeping, he observed, adding that such claims, when examined closely, do not withstand scrutiny of facts.

Referring to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the minister said India has consciously chosen the harder path of execution rather than short-term populism. According to Puri, the outcomes of this approach are visible not only in audited economic indicators but also in the lived experiences of households across the country. He argued that these tangible results will endure far longer than narratives rooted in pessimism.

Puri emphasised that scrutiny and even sharp criticism are essential in a democratic republic, but insisted that such arguments must be grounded in responsibility and evidence. A republic of over 1.4 billion people cannot be reformed by cynicism, he said, noting that progress in areas such as employment generation, productivity, exports, and social inclusion is inherently complex and gradual.

England set for sweeping review after lopsided Ashes defeat in Aus

England faces review, questioning tactics, adaptability, discipline and selection

SYDNEY

England's players and senior management will undergo a comprehensive performance review following their 4-1 Ashes series loss to Australia, with England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Richard Gould promising decisive changes in the months ahead.

The review was confirmed after England suffered a five-wicket defeat in the fifth and final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday, sealing another unsuccessful campaign Down Under. England arrived in Australia buoyed by confidence and talk of ending a 15-year wait for an Ashes series win on Australian soil, but were largely outplayed across conditions and venues.

Gould said the review would examine the planning, preparation and tactics of head coach Brendon McCullum and men's cricket director Rob Key, alongside individual performances, on-field behaviour and the team's ability to adapt to Australian conditions.

"This Ashes tour began with significant hope and anticipation," Gould said in a statement. "It is therefore deeply disappointing that we have been unable to fulfil our ambition of winning the Ashes in Australia. While there were moments of strong performance and resilience, we were not consistent enough across all phases of the contest."

England's solitary victory came in the fourth Test in Melbourne, briefly reviving hopes before Australia closed out the series in Sydney. Australia retained the Ashes with wins in Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide, and have now won four consecutive home Ashes series since England's last success in 2010-11.

McCullum, the chief proponent of England's aggressive, attack-first philosophy, said he remained committed to the team's core methods, though he acknowledged room for refinement. "You've got to have conviction in your methods," he told the BBC. "You're always open to evolution, but not a complete overhaul."

England's campaign was hampered by injuries to key fast bowlers Jofra Archer and Mark Wood, heavy physical demands on captain Ben Stokes, flawed batting under pressure and inconsistent fielding that proved costly throughout the series.

With the Twenty20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka approaching next month, Gould said the ECB was "determined to improve quickly" as England reassess direction, personnel and approach after another sobering Ashes tour.

Harmanpreet's MI chase 3rd WPL crown as RCB, DC gear up for title fight

NAVI MUMBAI

Fresh from India's historic maiden ODI World Cup triumph, the country's women cricketers return to competitive action as the fourth Women's Premier League (WPL) begins here on Friday, marking the start of preparations for this year's T20 World Cup.

Defending champions and two-time winners Mumbai Indians (MI), led by Harmanpreet Kaur, will open the tournament against the only other title-winning side, Smriti Mandhana's Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), at the DY Patil Stadium — regarded as the home of Indian women's cricket. The WPL will be held in two phases across Navi Mumbai and Vadodara.

On paper, MI appear the most formidable unit. Alongside Harmanpreet, they boast England captain Nat Sciver-Brunt and West Indies skipper Hayley Matthews, giving the side enviable balance and leadership. With most of their core retained, MI's batting depth is strengthened by Amelia Kerr, Australia's Milly Illingworth and India's Amanjot Kaur. Shabnim Ismail spearheads the bowling, while Saika Ishaque looks to rediscover her best form after a challenging period.

Delhi Capitals enter the season under new leadership, with Jemimah Rodrigues taking over the captaincy following Meg Lanning's move to UP Warriorz. Despite losing all three previous finals, DC possess a squad capable of going all the way. Shafali Verma, Laura Wolvaardt, Marizanne Kapp and Alana King form a strong core, though Annabel Sutherland's withdrawal has slightly dented their firepower.

RCB, champions in 2024, will rely heavily on Mandhana's leadership and runs at the top, especially in the absence of Ellyse Perry. Georgia Voll, Grace Harris, Nadine de Klerk and the explosive Richa Ghosh provide batting depth, while a varied bowling attack adds strength.

Gujarat Giants, led by Ashleigh Gardner, and a revamped UP Warriorz under Meg Lanning also remain in contention, ensuring a tightly contested WPL as teams fine-tune combinations ahead of the global showpiece later this year.

Osimhen, Lookman set to test Zidane in AFCON quarters

RABAT

Nigeria forwards Victor Osimhen and Ademola Lookman will attempt to shatter the flawless record of Algeria goalkeeper Luca Zidane when the two heavyweights meet in the Africa Cup of Nations quarter-finals in Morocco.

Zidane, son of French football legend Zinedine Zidane, is the only first-choice goalkeeper among the last eight to have kept clean sheets in every match he has played at the tournament. The 27-year-old has been a key figure in Algeria's resurgence, but his sternest examination awaits in Marrakesh on Saturday against Nigeria's prolific attack.

Osimhen and Lookman, both former African Player of the Year winners, have scored three goals each and spearhead Nigeria's tournament-leading tally of 12 goals. Algeria, meanwhile, have relied on discipline and resilience, with Zidane keeping Sudan, Burkina Faso and DR Congo at bay, the latter during a dramatic extra-time victory in the last 16.

Born in France and eligible to represent three nations, Zidane opted for Algeria, debuting in a World Cup qualifier last November. "I am proud to represent Algeria and play in the Africa Cup of Nations," he said, insisting his famous surname does not weigh heavily on him.

The quarter-finals, spread across Friday and Saturday, feature seven former AFCON champions, with all eight teams ranked inside Africa's top 10.

Highlighting stories key to lifting doubles format: Todd Woodbridge

CHENNAI

Multiple Grand Slam doubles champion Todd Woodbridge believes the future popularity of the doubles format hinges on how its stories are told, insisting that better presentation and narrative-building can restore the discipline's prominence alongside singles tennis.

Speaking in a select media interaction ahead of the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the season, the Australian great stressed that doubles has no shortage of compelling moments but often lacks sustained visibility. "There are always great stories in doubles," Woodbridge said. "They've got to be put out there and highlighted in the right way."

Woodbridge pointed to Wimbledon's annual tournament film, narrated by Billie Jean King, as an example of how doubles achievements can be showcased effectively. He cited Australia's Rinky Hijikata and his partner David Pel, who entered the draw as lucky losers and went on to make a deep run, as the kind of narrative fans connect with. "Those moments resonate when they're presented properly," he added.

The former world No. 1 doubles player acknowledged that doubles may never match singles as the sport's commercial pinnacle but argued it remains an essential part of tennis culture. "It is a major championship-winning event. It deserves to be treated as a leading attraction, not an afterthought," he said, noting that scheduling doubles finals after singles often leads to dwindling crowds.

Woodbridge also touched upon the recent mixed doubles exhibition at the US Open, where top singles stars paired up to play, drawing packed stands. While welcoming the attention, he cautioned that balance is crucial.

After injury setbacks, Shreyanka seeks revival, confidence and India recall

Fit-again Shreyanka Patil eyes fresh start and national return

BENGALURU

Once regarded as one of India's brightest young prospects, off-spinner Shreyanka Patil is ready to relaunch her career through the Women's Premier League after enduring a long and mentally taxing battle with injuries.

The Bengaluru cricketer was the toast of Indian women's cricket in March 2024, when she claimed the Purple Cap and Emerging Player of the Tournament awards during Royal Challengers Bengaluru's maiden WPL title triumph. Since then, however, progress has been repeatedly stalled by back-to-back injuries that forced her into extended rehabilitation programmes at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence, leaving her on the outside of the national setup.

Recalling the difficult phase, Shreyanka admitted the journey tested her resilience. "It was hard mentally, to be honest. I was really down," she said during a media interaction ahead of RCB's WPL opener against Mumbai Indians on January 9. She credited conversations with fellow players at the CoE and senior India stars for helping her regain perspective. "People like Jasprit Bumrah, Suryakumar Yadav and Riyan Parag really helped. Hearing about their struggles made me figure out my own way out."

India's historic maiden ODI World Cup triumph in November brought mixed emotions for the 22-year-old. "I was very proud and happy, but also disappointed because I couldn't be there. The World Cup was a big miss for me," she said.

Shreyanka has taken cautious steps on her comeback trail, returning to competitive cricket with the Barbados Royals in the Women's Caribbean Premier League in September, her first outing since October 2024. Though wickets were hard to come by, a retention call from RCB ahead of the mega auction proved a major emotional boost.

"For someone who hadn't played for 13 months, that trust meant everything," she said. Now fully fit, Shreyanka is clear about her immediate goal — to repay that faith by contributing to another WPL title — while quietly nurturing hopes of forcing her way back into India contention.

Former England great Kevin Keegan diagnosed with cancer, family confirms

NEWCASTLE

Former England forward and national team coach Kevin Keegan has been diagnosed with cancer, his family confirmed, prompting an outpouring of support from across the football world.

The 74-year-old was recently admitted to hospital after experiencing abdominal symptoms and subsequently underwent further medical tests. "These investigations have revealed a diagnosis of cancer, for which Kevin will undergo treatment," the family said in a statement shared by Newcastle United, a club with which Keegan shares a deep and enduring association as both a player and manager.

"Kevin is grateful to the medical team for their intervention and ongoing care. During this difficult time, the family are requesting privacy, and will be making no further comment," the statement added.

One of English football's most celebrated figures, Keegan enjoyed a distinguished playing career, winning the Ballon d'Or in 1978 and 1979 as Europe's Footballer of the Year. He represented England 63 times, scoring 21 goals, captained the national side and featured at the 1982 FIFA World Cup.

At club level, Keegan joined Liverpool in 1971 and became a central figure in one of the most successful periods in the club's history. During his time at Anfield, he won three English league titles, the FA Cup, two UEFA Cups and the European Cup in 1977.

His move to German side Hamburg elevated his global reputation, with his Ballon d'Or triumphs coming during his spell in the Bundesliga.

Keegan later played for Southampton and Newcastle United before retiring in 1984. He returned to Newcastle as manager in 1992, guiding the club to the brink of a Premier League title in the memorable 1995–96 season. After managing Fulham, he took charge of England in 1999 but resigned following Euro 2000 and a defeat to Germany at Wembley.

He later managed Manchester City and had a second spell at Newcastle, cementing his legacy as one of the most influential figures in English football.

McCullum Sticks to Bazball despite Ashes Loss

LONDON

England head coach Brendon McCullum has reaffirmed his commitment to the aggressive 'Bazball' approach despite England's 4-1 Ashes defeat in Australia. While the series exposed vulnerabilities in England's bold style, McCullum stressed that abandoning the philosophy would be counterproductive.

England struggled in the opening three Tests, with adventurous tactics failing against a disciplined Australian side. The consolation win at Melbourne and a competitive finish at the SCG offered some encouragement, but critics have questioned whether the approach is sustainable at the highest level.

"It is not about ripping up our script completely. From when we took over to where we are now, we are a better cricket team," McCullum said. "I am not rigid in my beliefs but I have conviction in my methods. That doesn't mean you are blind to progress, but to throw everything out in pursuit of something unknown doesn't make sense."

On his future, McCullum confirmed his desire to continue leading England. "We will digest the lessons from this tour. Staying true to our beliefs gives us the best chance to progress as a team in the coming years. This series was a missed opportunity, but abandoning what has worked is not the answer," he added.

Minor shooter accuses coach of sexual assault

NEW DELHI

India's shooting fraternity was rocked after a minor shooter accused a national-level coach of sexually assaulting her during the National Championships last month, prompting the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) to suspend the coach and confirm the registration of a police case under the stringent Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The accused, Ankush Bhardwaj, a prominent member of the national coaching setup, has been booked by Faridabad police under Section 6 of the POCSO Act, which deals with aggravated sexual assault, and Section 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for criminal intimidation. The alleged incident took place during the National Championships at the Karni Singh Shooting Range in Delhi.

NRAI secretary Rajiv Bhatia said the federation has barred Bhardwaj from all coaching-related duties pending the outcome of the investigation. "He has been suspended on moral grounds and a show-cause notice will be issued. Until the inquiry is completed, he will not be associated with any coaching activity," Bhatia told.

According to the FIR, the 17-year-old shooter had been training under Bhardwaj since August last year and travelled for competitions and training camps across several cities. She alleged that after her event at the Nationals, the coach asked her to stay back to analyse her performance and later summoned her to a hotel in the Surajkund area of Faridabad, where the alleged assault took place.

The victim stated that she was traumatised and remained silent for several days due to fear and threats, eventually confiding in her mother on January 1 after being repeatedly questioned about her changed behaviour. Police officials confirmed that an investigation is underway and statements are being recorded.

Bhardwaj was recommended by the NRAI for inclusion in the national coaching staff following the Paris Olympics in 2024 and was appointed by the Sports Authority of India. A former pistol shooter, he had previously served a doping ban in 2010.

The NRAI said it will extend full cooperation to the investigating agencies and reiterated its commitment to athlete safety.

Igor Thiago sets Premier League scoring record

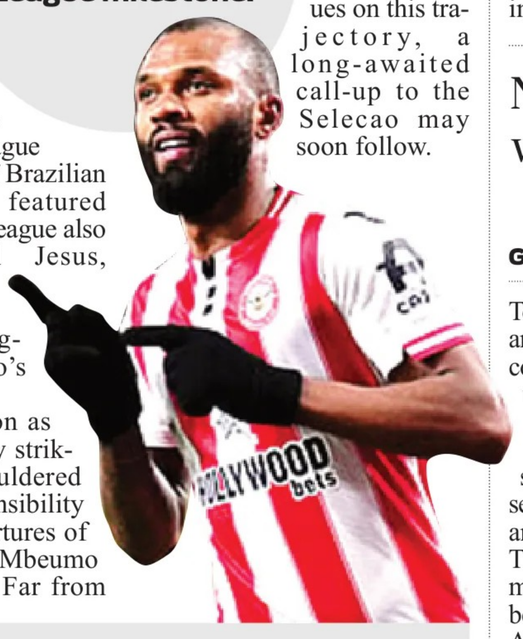
LONDON

Brazilian forward Igor Thiago etched his name into Premier League history by becoming the highest-scoring Brazilian in a single league season, continuing his remarkable debut campaign in England.

The 24-year-old Brentford striker took his tally to 16 Premier League goals with a brace in 3-0 victory over Sunderland, setting a new benchmark for Brazilian players in England's top flight. According to Opta, no Brazilian has previously scored more goals in a single Premier League campaign.

Thiago's achievement sees him overtake former Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino, Arsenal winger Gabriel Martinelli and Matheus Cunha — formerly of Wolverhampton Wanderers and now at Manchester United — all of whom recorded 15 goals in their most prolific Premier League seasons. The list of Brazilian attackers to have featured prominently in the league also includes Gabriel Jesus, Richarlison and Philippe Coutinho, underlining the significance of Thiago's feat.

Brentford striker surpasses Firmino, Martinelli to claim historic Premier League milestone.



In his first season as Brentford's primary striker, Thiago has shouldered the attacking responsibility following the departures of Ivan Toney, Bryan Mbeumo and Yoane Wissa. Far from being overawed, he has thrived as the focal point of Thomas Frank's attack, combining physical presence with sharp finishing to consistently trouble opposition defences.

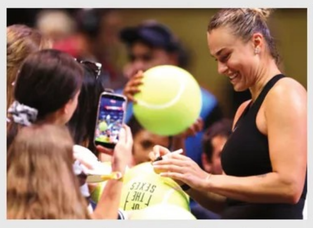
Wednesday's double not only sealed a comfortable win for Brentford but also reinforced Thiago's growing reputation as one of the Premier League's most effective forwards this season. His performances have been central to the club's push for a strong mid-table finish and have drawn increasing attention beyond west London.

Despite his prolific form, Thiago is yet to make his senior debut for Brazil. However, his goal-scoring exploits have strengthened his case for national selection, with the World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico later this year looming large.

If he continues on this trajectory, a long-awaited call-up to the Selecao may soon follow.

Sabalenka to skip events in 2026 to prioritise health

MELBOURNE



World number one Aryna Sabalenka has said she will again skip select tournaments during the 2026 season to protect her health, even though she is aware that doing so could lead to sanctions from the WTA Tour.

The Belarusian star described the tennis calendar as "insane" and warned that the relentless schedule is contributing to a growing number of injuries across the women's circuit. Under current WTA rules, top players are obliged to compete in all four Grand Slams, 10 WTA 1000 tournaments and six WTA 500 events, with penalties for non-compliance ranging from fines to deductions in ranking points.

Sabalenka, a four-time Grand Slam champion, was among several high-profile players to be penalised last year after she featured in only three WTA 500 tournaments — Brisbane, Stuttgart and Berlin — during the 2025 season. World number two Iga Swiatek was also docked points for a similar scheduling approach.

Asked whether she planned to adjust her calendar in 2026, Sabalenka was clear that her priority would remain physical well-being rather than strict adherence to mandatory events.

"The season is definitely insane, and that's not good for all of us, as you see so many players getting injured," Sabalenka told reporters after her win over Sorana Cirstea at the Brisbane International.

"The rules are quite tricky with mandatory events, but I'm still skipping a couple of tournaments to protect my body, because I struggled a lot last season," she said. Sabalenka admitted that despite consistent results, she often played while unwell or severely fatigued due to overplaying.

"Even though they are going to fine me by the end of the season, we will try to manage it better.

Dominant straight-games win signals Sindhu's resurgence as India's challenge narrows in Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia Open: Sindhu crushes Miyazaki to storm into quarterfinals

KUALA LUMPUR

India's star shuttler PV Sindhu delivered a commanding performance to reach the women's singles quarterfinals of the Malaysia Open Super 1000, thrashing eighth-seeded Japanese teenager Tomoka Miyazaki in straight games on Thursday.

Returning to competitive action after a prolonged injury lay-off, the former world champion looked every bit her authoritative best as she wrapped up a 21-8, 21-13 win in just 33 minutes. The victory also helped Sindhu extend her head-to-head record against Miyazaki to 2-1, underlining her growing confidence on the comeback trail.

Sindhu made a blistering start, racing to a 5-1 lead before producing a devastating run of 13 consecutive points to surge ahead 18-4 in the opening game. Her steep smashes, sharp net play and court coverage left the Japanese shuttler struggling to keep pace as the first game was sealed in no time.

The second game followed a similar script, although Miyazaki briefly threatened to make a contest of it when she trailed by just one point at 8-9. Sindhu, however, relied on her experience and tactical clarity to wrest back control, opening up a six-point cushion at 17-11 before closing out the match with ease.

The 30-year-old Indian will next face the winner of the pre-quarterfinal clash between China's Gao Fang Jie and third seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, in what is expected to be a stern test.

While Sindhu kept India's hopes alive, it was the end of the road for two Indian men's singles players. Lakshya Sen bowed out after a hard-fought pre-quarterfinal loss to Hong Kong-China's Lee Cheuk Yiu, while youngster Ayush Shetty pushed top seed Shi Yu Qi of China to the limit before losing a gruelling three-game encounter.

Earlier, former world No.1 men's doubles pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty progressed to the pre-quarterfinals with a comfortable straight-games win, ensuring continued Indian representation in the tournament.

Nikhat, Minakshi win as refereeing row flares

GREATER NOIDA

Top women boxers Nikhat Zareen and Minakshi Hooda cruised to comfortable victories at the National Boxing Championships, but the day's action was overshadowed by fresh controversies over refereeing, including a sensational allegation of "biting" and an abandoned men's bout. The spotlight fell on the men's middleweight (75kg) contest between Railways' Ishmeet and All India Police's (AIP) Mohit. Railways officials accused Mohit of biting Ishmeet on the shoulder multiple times during the second round after receiving a standing count in the opener. Ishmeet complained to the referee and showed visible bite marks, but the bout was allowed to continue, drawing strong protests from the Railways camp. "We have opposed the decision. The referee should have stopped the bout immediately," a Railways coach told. Biting is considered a serious foul in boxing and can lead to immediate disqualification. The medical officer later photographed the alleged marks for inclusion in the Technical Delegate's report, with the Boxing Federation of India expected to review the incident.

Raphinha double powers rampant Barcelona as winning streak stretches

Barca rout Athletic to storm into Spanish Super Cup final

JEDDAH

Raphinha struck twice as Barcelona delivered a ruthless display to crush Athletic Bilbao 5-0 in the Spanish Super Cup semi-final, underlining their status as one of Europe's most in-form sides.

The La Liga leaders, bidding to defend their Super Cup crown and extend their record haul of 15 titles, will now face either Real Madrid or Atletico Madrid in Sunday's final. Even with teenage sensation Lamine Yamal starting on the bench, Hansi Flick's side were far too strong for an Athletic team enduring a difficult campaign.

Barcelona wasted little time asserting control and took the lead in the 22nd minute when Ferran Torres bundled the ball home after Fermin Lopez's initial effort ricocheted kindly into his path. The Catalans then blew the game apart with three goals in a devastating eight-minute spell. Raphinha was at the heart of the surge, cutting the ball back for Lopez to thunder a shot into the top corner for the second. Moments later, Swedish winger Roony Bardghji added a third, aided by an uncharacteristic handling error from Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simon, whose misjudgment allowed the low shot to slip under his body and over the line.

Raphinha, recently back from a two-month hamstring layoff, capped a blistering first half by curling a fine strike into the top-left corner to make it 4-0. Athletic's misery was complete when the Brazil international grabbed his second soon after the break, finishing clinically from close range.

Oihan Sancet struck the post in what was Athletic's best chance on a chastening night for the Basque club, who last lifted the trophy in 2021. Barcelona, by contrast, extended their winning run to nine matches across all competitions.

"We make games easy or hard ourselves," Raphinha said afterward. "When we play well in all phases, everything flows."

Athletic captain Inaki Williams apologised to supporters, admitting his side were simply "not up to the level" on the night.

Bengaluru Open: Manas edges Beibit out

BENGALURU

Young Indian talents Manas Dhamne and Dhakshineswar Suresh kept the home flag flying at the Bengaluru Open, grinding out hard-fought three-set victories to reach the quarterfinals, even as Sumit Nagal bowed out after an epic second-round battle.

Eighteen-year-old Dhamne showed maturity beyond his years to overcome Kazakhstan's Beibit Zhukayev 6-2, 3-6, 6-2 at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium. Tested repeatedly by Zhukayev's powerful serves, Dhamne adjusted his tactics intelligently, staying patient from the baseline and capitalising on key breaks to close out the contest.

Earlier, 25-year-old Dhakshineswar produced a spirited comeback to beat French qualifier Felix Bradshaw 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (4). Hampered by taped knees and a dip in form after the opening set, the world No. 521 dug deep, saving himself from 0-30 down while Bradshaw served for the match. Errors from the Frenchman in the decisive tiebreak helped Dhakshineswar seal a memorable win and underline his fighting qualities.

The match of the day, however, came in the evening as second seed Harold Mayot edged out Nagal in a gripping three-hour marathon, winning 7-6 (2), 6-1, 7-6 (11). The encounter had everything—arguments with the chair umpire, an underarm serve, and dramatic momentum shifts. Nagal saved two match points to force the decider, while Mayot remarkably fought back from 2-6 down in the final tie-break, saving seven match points before clinching victory with an ace.

Despite a dominant second set from Nagal, where his fitness and court coverage stood out, fatigue crept in during the closing stages. Costly volley errors at crucial moments proved decisive, bringing a heartbreaking end to the Indian's campaign.

With Dhamne and Dhakshineswar advancing, Indian interest remains strong as the tournament heads into the quarterfinal stage.

Sesko double not enough as Man United held by Burnley

BURNLEY

Manchester United's turbulent week continued as a brace from Benjamin Sesko proved insufficient to secure victory, with the Red Devils held to a 2-2 draw by second-bottom Burnley in the Premier League.

Ruben Amorim's departure earlier this week failed to spark an immediate turnaround, as United dropped points for the fifth time in six league matches and missed another chance to push into the top four. Darren Fletcher, taking charge on an interim basis, scrapped Amorim's faltering 3-4-3 system in favour of a back four, while captain Bruno Fernandes returned from injury.

Burnley, winless since late October and eight points from safety, struck first through a slice of fortune. Bashir Humphreys' cross deflected off Ayden Heaven and looped beyond the stranded goalkeeper for an own goal. United's frustrations deepened when Lisandro Martinez saw a headed equaliser controversially ruled out for a foul on Kyle Walker, while further goal-line clearances from Humphreys and Maxime Esteve preserved Burnley's lead at the break.

Sesko, signed from RB Leipzig for a fee that could rise to £74 million, transformed the contest after half-time. The Slovenian rifled home from Fernandes' incisive through ball before calmly guiding Patrick Dorgu's cross past Martin Dubravka to turn the match on its head within 10 minutes.

Fletcher promptly withdrew Fernandes to protect the playmaker on his return from a hamstring injury, a decision that blunted United's creativity. Burnley took advantage when Jaidon Anthony was given time and space to curl a superb equaliser into the top corner.

United nearly stole the points late on as teenager Shea Lacey thundered a long-range effort against the crossbar, but the draw left them seventh in the table.

Inter extend Serie A lead at Parma after Napoli stumble

MILAN

Inter Milan tightened their grip on the Serie A summit with a 2-0 victory at Parma, taking advantage of title rivals Napoli dropping points in a 2-2 home draw against Verona.

Federico Dimarco broke the deadlock just before half-time at a foggy Stadio Ennio Tardini, before Marcus Thuram struck in stoppage time to seal Inter's sixth consecutive league win. The result moved Simone Inzaghi's side four points clear of third-placed Napoli and ensured they will remain top of the table until at least the weekend.

Inter's advantage could yet be trimmed to a single point, with second-placed AC Milan — level on 38 points with Napoli — hosting struggling Genoa in a local showdown. A heavyweight clash also awaits Inter on Sunday when they welcome reigning champions Napoli to the San Siro in a potentially pivotal Scudetto encounter.

"Today it was important to win, and that's what we did," Dimarco told. "Now we can start thinking about Sunday's match."

Inter might have wrapped up the contest earlier. Young striker Pio Esposito, starting in place of Thuram, rattled the crossbar midway through the first half, while Parma academy graduate Ange-Yoan Bonny had a late effort ruled out for handball. Petar Sucic also squandered a golden chance after the break when sent clean through by Lautaro Martinez.

Napoli were forced to mount a second-half comeback after trailing 2-0 at the interval. Scott McTominay's header sparked the revival.

In Naples, Napoli were forced to mount a second-half comeback after trailing 2-0 at the interval. Scott McTominay's header sparked the revival before captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo curled in a superb equaliser eight minutes from time to salvage a point.

"The positive is that we came back, but it's not the result we wanted," Di Lorenzo admitted.

Napoli's struggles have been compounded by injuries, with Romelu Lukaku, Andre-Frank Anguissa and Kevin De Bruyne all sidelined. Elsewhere, Atalanta continued their resurgence with a 2-0 win at Bologna, while Fiorentina were held 2-2 by Lazio after a late Pedro penalty.

Yash's 'Toxic' Teaser Wows Fans With Powerful Action

On the occasion of superstar Yash's birthday, the much-awaited Kannada film Toxic released its teaser, leaving fans thrilled with the actor's intense and powerful presence. The 2-minute 45-second teaser has been produced in a Hollywood-style format, marking a new benchmark for Kannada cinema.

The teaser begins with striking visuals of a cremation ground, hinting at chaos and tension. Yash's character, Ray, is introduced in dramatic fashion. In a high-impact sequence, he appears shirtless, holding a distinctive rifle on his shoulder, dressed in all-black attire. The actor delivers just one dialogue, Daddy is home, which immediately sets the tone for his character's bold and commanding personality. The scene highlights his muscular physique and precise shooting skills, capturing the audience's attention from the first frame.

Produced and led by Yash in collaboration with KVN Films, Toxic is directed by Malayalam filmmaker Geethu Mohandas. The film features a talented ensemble cast including Rukmini Vasanth, Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Huma Qureshi, and Tara Sutaria, adding star value and excitement to the project. The worldwide release is scheduled for March 19.

Unlike traditional Sandalwood promotions, Yash is not meeting fans in person during this phase, focusing entirely on the film's production. The teaser has already generated massive buzz online, indicating a shift from conventional marketing approaches in Kannada cinema. Fans have expressed their excitement for the combination of action, style, and star power, making Toxic one of the most anticipated films of the year.

With this teaser, Yash has set high expectations, promising a thrilling cinematic experience when Toxic hits theaters worldwide in March.

Tamil Film Fraternity Voices Support For 'Jana Nayagan' Release

The delayed release of Thalapathy Vijay's highly anticipated Tamil film Jana Nayagan, caused by a censor-related controversy, has sparked strong support from the Tamil film industry. Several prominent filmmakers and actors have come forward to voice solidarity, highlighting the film's cultural relevance and its importance as a potential Pongal release.

Director Ravi Mohan expressed emotional support on social media, describing the delay as heartbreaking and standing firmly with Vijay. He remarked that the film does not require a fixed release date, stating that Pongal truly begins only when Jana Nayagan releases, a sentiment that deeply resonated with fans. Director Venkat Prabhu also shared his confidence, asserting that despite the challenges, the film will deliver what he called the biggest fare-well in Indian cinema, reinforcing faith in its eventual success.

Actor Shanthanu echoed similar sentiments, saying audiences will always stand by what is right. He tweeted that Pongal starts only with Jana Nayagan, adding hopeful words suggesting that justice and victory will prevail. Actor Vijay Vasanth raised political concerns, pointing to alleged delays in certification and recalling previous remarks perceived as disrespectful to Tamil culture, which further intensified fan reactions. Support also poured in from filmmakers Ajay Gnanamuthu, Karthik Subbaraj, Shanmugam Muthusamy, and John Mahendran, who praised the film and its team. At the same time, fans expressed disappointment over the silence of some industry members, calling for greater unity within Kollywood.

Mamitha Baiju's Song Sparks Meme Fest At Jana Nayagan

Actress Mamitha Baiju's impromptu singing at the pre-release event of Thalapathy Vijay's upcoming film Jana Nayagan has gone viral, triggering memes and online debate. She sang two lines from Ella Pugazhum from Azhagiya Tamizh Magan, recalling a childhood memory. While some fans appreciated her spontaneity, others criticised her singing, leading to trolling and humorous social media posts.

Meanwhile, Jana Nayagan's release has been postponed from its original January 9, 2026 date due to unavoidable circumstances. Directed by H. Vinoth, the film marks Vijay's political farewell and stars Pooja Hegde, Prakash Raj, and Gautham Vasudev Menon.

Sreeleela Shares Fondness For Mammootty, Dulquer

Actress Sreeleela, known for her work in Kannada and Telugu cinema, recently expressed admiration for Malayalam superstars Mammootty and Dulquer Salmaan while promoting her Tamil debut Parasakthi. Directed by Sudha Kongara, the film stars Sivakarthikeyan and is reportedly based on the anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu. Its release, initially planned for January 10, is currently uncertain due to a pending censor certificate.

At a pre-release event in Kerala, Sreeleela shared her fondness for Mammootty and Dulquer, praising their performances and contributions to cinema. The event also saw Sivakarthikeyan delight fans by quoting a popular Mohanlal dialogue.

Parasakthi also features Ravi Mohan and Atharvaa in key roles. Meanwhile, Sreeleela continues to expand her pan-Indian presence, with upcoming projects in Hindi, including a film opposite Kartik Aaryan.

Anil Kapoor Applauds Kannada Film Industry

Bollywood veteran Anil Kapoor has paid a warm tribute to the Kannada film industry, recalling his debut and appreciating its current global success. Kapoor, who made his Kannada film debut with Pallavi Anupallavi in 1983, shared his nostalgia on social media, highlighting the growth of the industry over the past four decades.

43 years ago, I took my first step into the Kannada film industry. From then to now, it's incredible to see how Kannada cinema is booming and redefining Indian cinema globally, Kapoor wrote on X, sharing a clip from his debut film directed by Mani Ratnam. The actor starred alongside Lakshmi and Kiran Vairale in Pallavi Anupallavi, which remains one of his favourite films.

Kapoor also praised the contribution of contemporary Kannada cinema stars and filmmakers, including Yash, Rishab Shetty, and Prashanth Neel, for their work in films such as KGF and Kantara. Salute to TheNameIsYash, PrashanthNeel, shetty_rishab, and the teams behind KGF and Kantara for raising the bar so high. Hopefully not my last association with this amazing industry, he added.

Rishab Shetty responded to Kapoor's post with admiration and respect. We're so proud of you, Sir! Your journey began here, and today you stand as a true legend of Indian cinema. It was an absolute honor to meet you and have such a wonderful conversation, he tweeted.

The interaction between the Bollywood icon and the Kannada film fraternity has resonated with fans, celebrating the enduring legacy of Pallavi Anupallavi and the rising global recognition of Kannada cinema. Kapoor was last seen in the Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR-starrer War 2, continuing his celebrated journey in Indian cinema.

Samantha Returns With Retro, Edgy Look In Poster

Actress Samantha is back on the big screen with a brand-new avatar in the upcoming film Maa Inti Bangaram, and her first look poster has already created a buzz among fans. The poster showcases Samantha in a raw, retro 1980s-inspired look, giving off strong action-packed and comedic vibes, signalling a departure from her previous roles.

Directed by Nandini Reddy, the film is described as a whacky, small-town dramedy set in the heart of the 1980s. Reddy explained, Think Kill Bill meets Kalisundam Raa. It has all the heart of a family drama, but with a serious edge. You'll see Sam in her whackiest avatar yet; she's doing everything from action to comedy in 'full-on' mode. We designed this poster to capture that exact energy and raw intensity.

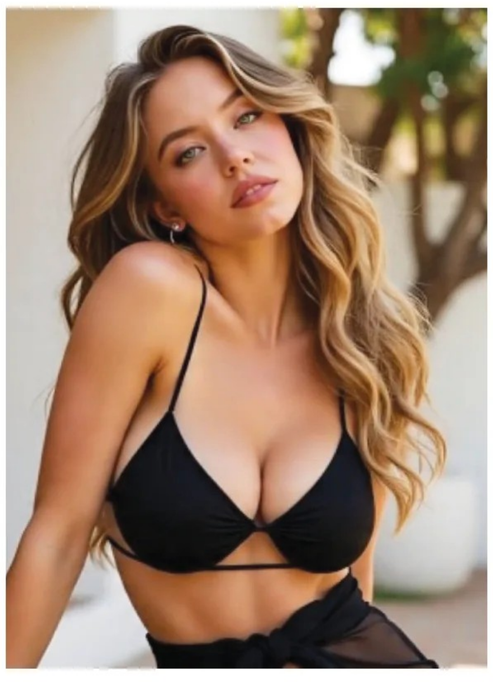
The teaser poster highlights Samantha's edgy 80s swagger, hinting at a blend of high-octane action sequences and heartfelt family moments. Fans are particularly excited to see the actress embrace such a dynamic range, from fierce combat to playful comic timing, all within the same project.

Maa Inti Bangaram promises to be a unique cinematic experience, combining nostalgia with modern storytelling. Samantha's transformation and the film's retro aesthetic have already sparked discussions on social media, with viewers praising her bold look and the creative concept behind the poster.

Nikhila Vimal's 'Pennu' Reschedules After Delay

The unexpected postponement of Thalapathy Vijay's Jana Nayagan has opened the way for the Malayalam film Pennu Case, starring Nikhila Vimal, to move its release forward. Originally set for January 16, 2026, the film will now hit theatres on January 10, with paid premieres from January 9. Directed by Febin Sidharth, Pennu Case features Aju Varghese, Hakim Shahjahan, Ramesh Pisharody, and Irshad Ali. Social media reacted to the shift with playful comments about the "Thalapathy effect" and the sudden availability of screens. The early release allows the film to capitalize on the Pongal festival, attracting audiences amid uncertainty around Vijay's delayed release.

Sydney Sweeney Returns For 'The Housemaid' Sequel 2026



Sydney Sweeney is set to return for the sequel to the 2022 hit thriller The Housemaid, with production scheduled to begin in 2026. The Euphoria star is expected to take on a lead role while also serving as an executive producer for the follow-up, tentatively titled The Housemaid's Secret.

The sequel, based on the second novel in Freida McFadden's trilogy, will once again be directed by Paul Feig. Amanda Seyfried, who starred as Nina in the first film, continues her role as an executive producer, although her character is reportedly absent in this chapter. The door remains open for Seyfried to make a potential appearance.

The Housemaid revolves around Millie, portrayed by Sweeney, a young woman trying to escape her troubled past. She is recruited as a live-in housemaid by the wealthy couple Nina and Andrew Winchester, played by Seyfried and Brandon Sklenar. Their luxurious home hides dangerous secrets, and Millie finds an ally in the groundkeeper Enzo, portrayed by Michele Morrone.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.